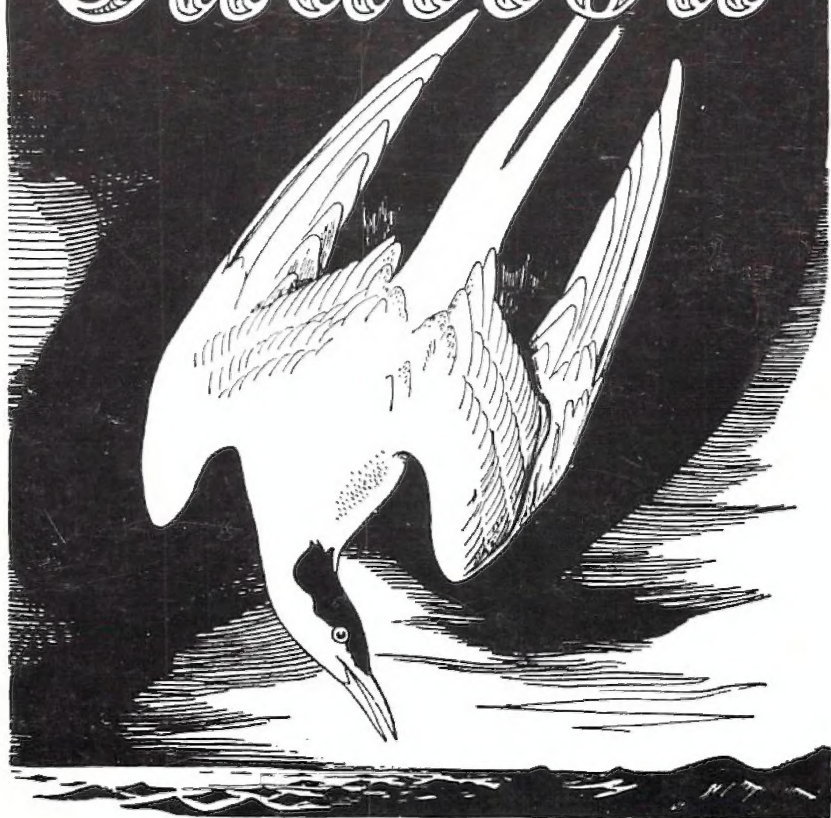


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OF THE ROYAL NAVAL  
BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

PUBLISHED 1985

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*Subscription rates.* Full members £5 annually. Associate members—Cost of *Sea Swallow* (£4) plus postage.

*Membership* has been widened from the R.N. to include all those who share a common background — the sea itself — regardless of nationality.\*

*Aims and activities.* The primary aim of the Society is to promote a forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of landbirds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore.

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Completed record forms should be sent to Stephen Chapman (seabirds) and the Chairman (landbirds).

Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor (see instructions to authors inside back cover).

\*An application form for membership is at the back of this edition of *Sea Swallow*.

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H.M.S. *Courageous*, Gentoo Penguins and Able Seaman Alton —  
Falkland Islands, 1984

*Photo:* Official Naval Photograph

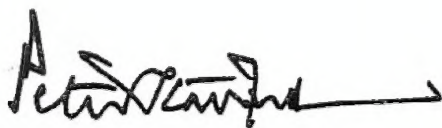


## FOREWORD

This time last year, I wrote of the preparations I was making for a visit to the South Atlantic. It was a memorable week; and nobody who has travelled the air-bridge is ever likely to feel the same again about long-range flying. Yet leaving an England of disappearing summer migrants in late September, one marvelled, hours later amongst the hot, wet smells of the fuelling stop at Dakar, at renewing the acquaintanceship of the newly-arrived House Martins and the swifts: and not long after that at the thought of where all those terns in Ascension had come from. A similar vein of wonderment ran through the next few days in the Falklands; and pressing as were the claims of a busy programme, the eternal ornithological fascination of a prospect of seeing something new — even if, or perhaps particularly if, there was no sure source of reference — impressed itself once more upon me. The birds I saw in those few days, at sea and on shore, made a list neither long or particularly varied, and certainly no useful contribution to this journal. There were however some notable 'firsts', and a hoodwink or two. The hoodwink *Dissimulatrix sputia* is, of course, that bird described by the eminent Professor Meiklejohn, as always partially seen or indeterminately heard, the 'brown blur that passes rapidly from right to left in all ornithological films'.

And on an afternoon when I managed to get in a quick visit to the Murrell River, and caught nothing, while my Secretary hauled in a sea-trout which did his career no good at all, I could comfort myself with the not very specious argument that I wasn't really trying, absorbed as I was in watching a pair of immaculate Dotterel *Zonibyx modestus*, who clearly owned the place, posturing on the opposite bank. Heaven can have few more gentle balms.

I know that our Chairman is keeping up the pace in helping people in ships on deployment, and other visitors abroad — not just in the South Atlantic but elsewhere — to observe and record. I believe his efforts are bearing fruit, although clearly I did not do too well. What I earnestly hope is that results will be seen in an increasing membership, and this must be a task with which to welcome our new Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. To Winton Maclure, who leaves us, I can only echo the thanks and good wishes which we all wish to voice, and which are more fully expressed elsewhere in this journal.



## EDITORIAL

As will be seen from the wealth of material in this journal our members have had another busy and fruitful year. We have also been able to print the three major articles space did not permit last year so the backlog has been cleared. Particularly welcome is the increased reporting from the South Atlantic, and our Honorary Member and Advisor, Bill Bourne himself has been there recently on three occasions as ship's surgeon on board R.F.A.'s *Olwen*, *Sir Lancelot* and *Olna*. Our special thanks are due to him, not only for the formidable task of co-ordinating with Bill Curtis, the records from numerous observers from ships of the various Task Groups, but also his continued encouragement and help to many of us part-time amateurs. This journal is read by ornithologists world-wide and in the constant quest to maintain high standards and accuracy of reporting, Bill's knowledge and professional advice in sorting out the identification of difficult seabird species is invaluable.

To all those who contributed to this year's survey of the South Atlantic, even if your name does not appear in print, many thanks; every small piece of the jig-saw helps towards the total picture. Also as a means to this end, the Society has become a member of the Falkland Islands Trust which is co-ordinating conservation studies of the area and all R.N.B.W.S. members (and non-members) visiting the Falklands are strongly encouraged to contact the local representatives (see insided back cover) to see how they can contribute to their work.

I am also especially pleased to include Michael Gallagher's article from another ornithologically important part of the world. I hope this will stimulate more reporting from R.N. ships in this area from which there has been a lamentable lack in recent years, and that ships of the Armilla Patrol will take up this challenge in the future.

There have been major changes behind the scenes this year. Peter Chilman has relieved John Agnew in the co-ordination of records from Ocean Weather Ship *Starella*. Peter Smith has taken over as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer from Winton Maclure. I ask all members to take this opportunity to bring up to date their covenants and banker's standing orders; there are still a significant number who have not done so since the subscriptions were raised to £5 in 1982.

The Society is in reasonable financial health, but only just, and we need increased membership. If each of you were to recruit one new member this year our problems would be solved and an application form is included for this purpose on page 84.

As yet another year slips by reports and records continue to arrive in a steady stream. Many thanks, and please keep them flowing, but I make a special plea to those who do not use R.N.B.W.S. standard reporting forms — these have been designed specifically to ease the task both for you and for those who analyse them. Please write to Chief Petty Officer Bailey for a supply or, if postal delays are the problem, photocopy locally additional copies.

Good birdwatching, and have fun.

Michael Casement.





LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER E. S. W. MACLURE, ROYAL NAVY  
Honorary Secretary and Treasurer 1957-1985

The name of Winton Maclure, and his address in Southsea where he has lived for over 40 years, is as familiar to all members of R.N.B.W.S. as was that of Captain Gerald Tuck. Between them they epitomised, indeed were the driving force of, the Society, and Winton was the perfect foil to implement the plans, ideas and enthusiasm of Gerald's fertile mind. So indispensable was Winton that when I was rather reluctantly persuaded to take over on Gerald's retirement I did so only on the understanding that Winton would remain for a reasonable period to help me similarly. Indeed he has done so and he has been particularly busy on my behalf during the last three years when I have been serving in the United States.

But that era is now at an end. Increasingly at recent Annual General Meetings he has made known his wish to hand over the reins to someone else and Peter Smith has gallantly agreed to this. The turnover is now complete, and Winton has now moved to a smaller house to be near his daughter in Waterlooville. Will all members please therefore help by noting the address of our new Hon. Secretary, see inside front cover.

All members will be familiar with Winton's inimitable and meticulous handwriting and he wrote personally and individually to countless other correspondents and enquirers about birdwatching at sea. For 27 years he has conscientiously managed the accounts of the Society, kept up to date the membership address list, tactfully reminded erring members to renew or update their subscriptions, edited and produced the regular bulletins, despatched the ever increasing numbers of *Sea Swallow*, and made the arrangements for the AGMs. During his stewardship our membership has grown from 177 to 462. We all owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude and as a small token of our thanks, those who were present at the last AGM presented him with a suitably inscribed book (see photo above). For those of you who have not met him, Winton looks much younger than his years (76) and has an impish sense of humour and a delightful chuckle which is his hallmark.

Since his wife died in 1969, Winton has lived on his own surrounded by his many bird books and R.N.B.W.S. papers, but his three daughters and nine grandchildren have been a great support and encouragement to him. We wish him well in his new home and a well-earned rest after all he has done for the Society. I feel sure he will continue to be actively interested in birds and will keep in touch.



# SEABIRDS OF THE KURIA MURIA ISLANDS, ARABIAN SEA

By M. D. Gallagher

## *Introduction*

The Kuria Muria archipelago of desert islands (see map, Fig. 1), although known, since guano was discovered there about 150 years ago, to have large numbers of breeding birds, has been extraordinarily difficult to reach and to study. Not only are the islands remote, but in summer, when most nesting was suspected, the strong winds and turbulent seas of the southwest monsoon have made landings impossible or hazardous.

For short periods in 1963 and 1964 the region was again in the public eye when it was visited by R.R.S. *Discovery*, while making an oceanographic survey as part of the British contribution to the International Indian Ocean Expedition (I.I.O.E.). Dr R. S. Bailey, on board as ornithologist, made the first systematic study of the seabirds of southeastern Arabia (Bailey 1965, 1966, 1972), which gives an insight into the species which occur and their seasonal distribution in relation to marine conditions.

Since late 1976, as part of my work for the Government of Oman, and with the indispensable assistance of the Sultan of Oman's Navy and Air Force, I have visited the islands occasionally for periods of a few minutes to ten days, twice in the summer monsoon of 1983. Visits have not been possible at regular intervals to all the islands throughout the year, and this means that we still lack detailed knowledge of the complete annual cycles of the birds which occur, and of the seasonal abundance of their fish prey. Table 1 lists my visits in chronological order with others which I have been able to trace. The scientific names of seabirds are given in Table 2. As the bibliography is too long to include here, I will mention only the principal ornithological accounts.

## *Description*

The four main islands of the Kuria Muria are Al Hasikiyah, Al Sawda, Al Hallaniyah and Al Qibliyah, and they span 34 miles from west to east approximately along the 17°30'N parallel, with Al Gharzant (or Qarzawit) slightly to the north at 17°37'N. They are described by Hulton (1839-1840) and Haines (1845), and very briefly in the *Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Pilot* (12th Edition, 1980, pp. 216-218), but I will add to these and will give the altitudes shown on the latest Ordnance Survey maps. The islands lie in Kuria Muria Bay, only 20 to 26 miles from mainland Dhofar, the southern province of Oman, of which they form part. But they are nearly 140 miles from the airport at Salalah and from the port at Raysut. Only Al Hallaniyah has drinking water, is inhabited, and is now visited frequently. The villagers now have boats and can reach all islands in calm weather. All sites used by breeding birds are

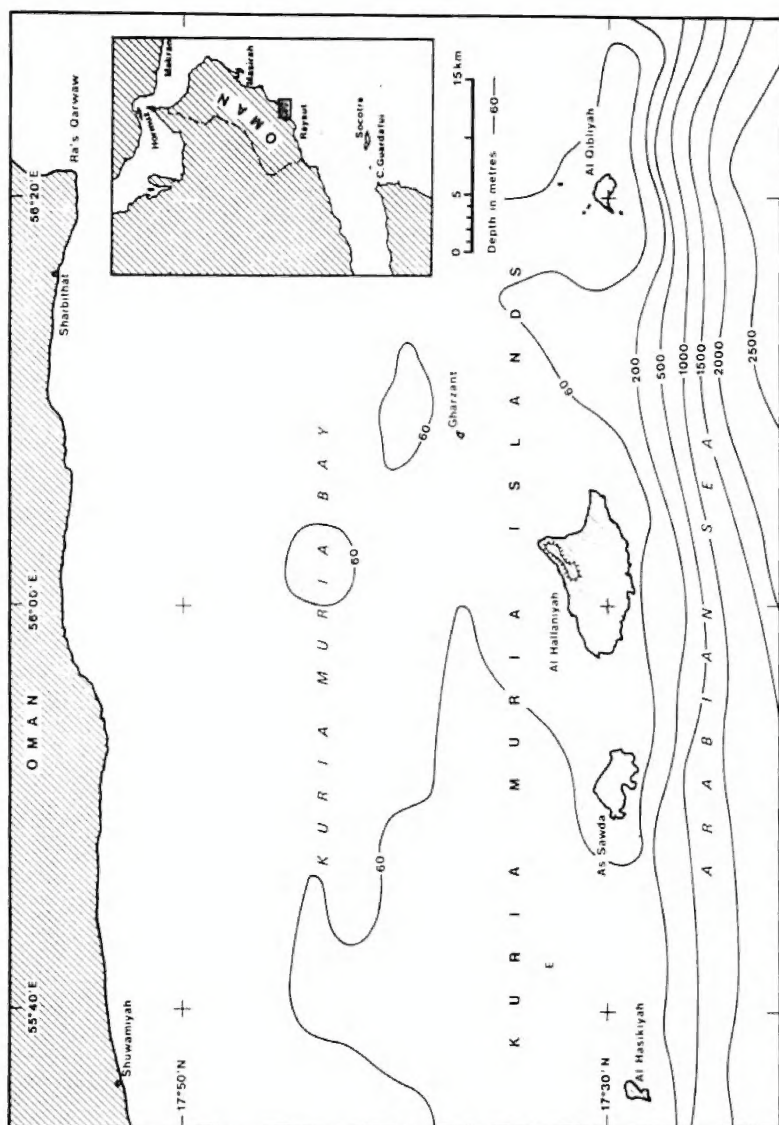


Fig. 1. Kuria Muria Islands

infested with a voracious tick, whose bites are particularly unpleasant to humans and usually cause much irritation, and occasionally blisters or fever possibly due to infection by an arbovirus.

Like Masirah Island, over 200 miles to the northeast, the group stands on the edge of the submerged Arabian continental shelf, and the map (Fig. 1) shows how this shelf plunges in a steep bathymetric scarp just south of Al Hallaniyah. The rock formations show that these islands, and the Socotra group 370 miles to the southwest, were part of the same continental land mass before the Gulf of Aden was formed in the mid-Tertiary.

AL HASIKIYAH (Haski, Hasiky, Harky) is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles long, with several conical peaks up to 155 m high at the southwestern end. A broad plateau fans out towards the northeast, which is dissected by many dry water-courses in which dusty guano lies in thin layers amongst the stones and sparse vegetation, and these end in narrow rocky gulleys at the shore. The Masked Booby nests here during most of the year, and Socotra Cormorant nests on the plateau and in the gulleys from June or July. Sooty Gull probably nests regularly, and Crested Tern occasionally. This was the only island visited by I.I.O.E., for two hours on 10 March 1964.

AL SAWDA (Suda, Sooda, Soda, Sodah, Suweidiya, the black one) is the second largest, about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles long from west to east and mostly mountainous, with a maximum elevation of 415 m near the centre. The coast is rocky, but there is sand on the beach to the northeast where Crested Tern nested in 1978 and probably in 1983. Thousands of Sooty Gulls nest throughout in summer.

AL HALLANIYAH (Hullaniyah, Hellaniyah, Hellany, Halanee, or Kid Island), the largest of the group, is 9 miles long on its west-east axis, 5 miles at its broadest and nearly 23 miles in circumference. Most of the island is a confused and almost impenetrable mass of granite ridges and peaks, one of which has an elevation of 459 m. Narrow gorges drain to several broader sandy or gravelly wadis, and in the west to a broad dusty plain, which has an airstrip near the village, being rebuilt by immigrant labour to rehouse the 61 inhabitants.

The northeast of the island is strikingly different. A raised tabular mass of almost horizontal beds of limestones, sandstones and volcanic tuff over 3 miles long stretches along the north coast and terminates at an elevation of 501 m in the majestic north-eastern bluff of Ra's Hallaniyah. This impressive feature has a syncline in the centre and is topped by an uneven plateau. Differential weathering has formed four fissured tiers of sheer cliffs on the north face, each separated by a hard strata and a scree slope (plate 1). Great blocks have fallen from the eastern and southern flanks to the slopes below. The remainder of the northeastern area consists of low ridges and hills of limestones,





Plate I. Part of the 501 metre high cliffs of Ra's Hallaniyah, on which the remains of nesting Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri persicus* were discovered in 1982

Photo: M. D. Gallagher

conglomerates, sand and gravel, which lead down to the wide sandy bay of Ghubbat al Rahib (my camp site of 1981). Near the south-eastern corner of the island is 'Haddington Cove' (a 19th Century name), where there are two poor wells, ruined habitations and extensive cemeteries.

Brackish seepages and patchy vegetation support many feral goats. There are also feral domestic cats, Black Rats, colubrid snakes and ticks, all of which disturb the nesting birds. Red-billed Tropic-bird, suspected of nesting, was proved to do so in September 1981. Recently-dead chicks of the Audubon's Shearwater were found in October 1982, proving that this species had nested on the main cliff that summer. The Sooty Gull nests regularly in large numbers, and the Crested Tern occasionally. The Common Noddy has not been found nesting again here since it was first reported in 1873, but likely cliffs and rock stacks have not been searched thoroughly in summer — a formidable task. The Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*, seen in autumn 1981 and 1982, may be the only resident landbird.

AL QIBLIYAH (Jiblya, Jibleea, Jibley, Jabaliya, Kablia, Kibliyah, Deriabi, the eastern one) is about 2 miles from west to east, 1 mile at its broadest and has a circumference of 5 miles. Although hilly from all aspects, with several peaks, ridges and cliffs and maximum elevation 185 m, this island is perhaps the least unpleasant and difficult to explore, for the hills, though steep-sided, are negotiable, and there are broad areas of lower but uneven ground around or between them. There are some caves, some brackish water seepages (not reported before) and there is patchy vegetation. Prior to my visits in 1983 the only bird reported nesting here was the Masked Booby; I was able to add Red-billed Tropic-bird, Sooty Gull, Bridled Tern and Common Noddy. Pallid Swifts *Apus pallidus* were flying round one cave in May as if nesting or about to nest, but they were not seen in July. Masked Booby appeared to be nesting on nearby Four Peaked Rock, and I verified this on 19 January 1985. I found many traces of the mining of guano in 1857-1860, and boobies were nesting on the disturbed ground. This was not a popular place in 1836, when Captain S. B. Haines, Indian Navy, found that "its other occupants are almost every thing disagreeable to man — and they thrive well: snakes, rats, mice, scorpions and centipedes without number" (Haines 1845). In 1983 I found all except the rodents, but also lizards, moths, butterflies, grasshoppers, beetles and ticks.

AL GHARZANT (Qarzewit, Kirzawet, Cshurzoud, Gursond, Ghursood, Gharzaut, Rodondo) lies to the northwest of Al Qibliyah and is only  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile long. It appears as a small, prominent double-peaked granite rock, like a twin sail, with a maximum elevation of 70 m, but there are several lower rocks. Masked Booby were nesting here when I landed in April 1978, though there were

then many unoccupied nest sites; they appeared still to be nesting when over-flown by helicopter on 3 July 1983, and several swifts rose with them. That birds still occupy this island is heartening, as it is used as a gunnery target.

### *The Weather and Seas*

The significance to birdlife of these barren-looking islands lies in the combination of two facts: they lie on the edge of the continental shelf in seas which are highly productive in summer, and they are (with the exception of western Al Hallaniyah), the only large uninhabited islands for hundreds of miles.

The primary cause of the high biological activity in the seas off southeastern Arabia is the strength of the monsoon wind in summer. There are two main seasons, marked by a reversal of winds and currents, and interspersed by periods of uncertain weather. In summer, from mid-May until mid-September, the warm, moist southwestern monsoon winds reach southern Oman across the Indian Ocean from about 10°N, though the intensity of the monsoon varies. The monsoon reaches a peak in July and August, when winds reach an average maximum of Force 6, occasionally Force 9, parallel to the coast of southeastern Arabia; within 20 miles of the mainland coast the wind strength is modified by the land mass and the variable land- and sea-breezes. The surface current flows strongly northeastward with the wind, though there are many local horizontal and vertical eddies. From late May, the surface water tends to be drawn offshore by a combination of drift by the strengthening wind and the Coriolis force, and is replaced by cool bottom water, which wells to the surface, rich in salts. This phenomenon has two important effects. Firstly, the nutrient-rich water causes a high rate of organic production, particularly of zooplankton, and Bailey has shown that the cold-water bird species are most numerous where this plankton is abundant. Many fish and cephalopods come to the area or increase in numbers at this time and provide food for other seabirds. Secondly, the surface water cools the air passing over it to dew point, heavy dew occasionally falls at night, mist or fog is frequent and low cloud cover is common along part of the mainland coast and sometimes 25 to 60 miles southward. The hilly nature of the islands creates intermittent cloud cover over them and drizzle or rain occasionally results.

In winter (November to late March) the dry, cool northeast monsoon blows with an average of Force 3 or 4 and causes a reversal of the current. The main upwelling subsides by September, productivity declines and most visiting seabirds depart. Occasional cyclonic storms bring heavy rain locally at any time, and the many scoured water-courses on the islands are evidence of the volume of water which results. However, no reliance can be placed on the weather in Kuria Muria bay. Even between October and May



sudden northerly land winds, called *Balat* or *Balad*, blow up with startling suddenness. These last from between a few hours to up to ten days, the squalls giving no warning except for a black cloud and the noise on the water. They are often succeeded by strong southerly winds with a long swell (Haines 1845).

### *The Seabirds*

There is a distinct resident seabird fauna of the region from East Africa and the Red Sea, across to the Arabian Gulf (Table 2). All those listed are known to nest on the Kuria Muria islands with the exception of Jouanin's Petrel and White-cheeked Tern. Large numbers of some other species come to feed over the upwelling off southeast Arabia during the summer, particularly the Pale-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes* from its feeding grounds in Australasia, the Wedge-tailed Shearwater *P. pacificus* probably from the southern Indian Ocean, and the Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* from Antarctica. Other species of storm-petrel have been reported further offshore, and Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster* are seen off the mainland coast. In addition, a number of passage migrants and winter visitors are seen on or near the islands. Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, an autumn nester in other parts of coastal Oman, has not been reported. The following accounts give a current assessment of the status and behaviour of the nesting seabirds.

**Jouanin's Petrel.** Although recognised as a distinct species in 1955 its breeding grounds remain undiscovered. It assembles off the southeast coast and Masirah from March, is seen near the Kuria Muria islands from May to August and disperses by mid-September. Bailey (1966) cites evidence which suggests a laying period starting around June. It may nest on the islands or the coastal mountains, though the discovery of three birds, two with traces of down, at Thamarit, in the desert 45 miles north of Salalah on 5 December 1978 (Walker 1981; W. R. P. Bourne *in litt.*) is an indication that the species may use the most inhospitable areas further inland, as several do on the west coast of South America.

**Audubon's Shearwater** sub sp. *persicus*. Large concentrations occur off southeast Arabia from June to August; it then disperses towards the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Gulf/Baluchistan coast where it is common locally in autumn and spring. There are few winter records. Although it was described in 1872, this race was not found breeding until several decaying chicks were discovered below the upper cliffs near Ra's Hallaniyah in the autumn of 1982, indicating that it must have nested there during that summer (plate 1). Bailey found the largest concentrations in summer off Al Sawda island, which has yet to be searched thoroughly.



Plate II. Masked Booby landing, Al Qibliyah, July 1983

*Photo: M. D. Gallagher*

**Red-billed Tropic-bird.** Widespread and not restricted to the upwelling area, it is reported near potential nest sites of Oman all the year, but more commonly between February and September or October. Around the Kuria Muria islands the largest numbers have been reported from April to September. Breeding was suspected as early as 1873, but not proved until an adult with a chick was found on Al Hallaniyah on 24 September 1981, where I estimated that about 100 pairs may nest in a season. About 100 pairs were also occupying sites on Al Qibliyah in May 1983, and had laid, apparently synchronously, by 3 July. None were seen near the Kuria Murias in January 1985.

**Masked Booby.** This species nests on Al Hasikiyah, Al Qibliyah and Gharzant. An estimate (in Gallagher & Rogers 1980) that 10,000 pairs might nest on Al Qibliyah at the height of the season may prove to be too high, though this number may nest on the whole island group during the course of a year. Peak laying appears to occur in May, when, on Al Qibliyah in 1983, I found nearly 5,000 pairs courting or nesting, with 1 or 2 (usually 2, but once 3) eggs, and with young of all sizes; the situation was rather similar in July the same year, with possibly a slight increase in numbers. Allowing a fledging period of four months, the presence of fledged young in May 1983 indicates that courting must start in December. In January 1985 many pairs were courting on Al Qibliyah and Four Peaked Rock, and flying in pairs at sea; a very few birds were on eggs or had white-downed chicks.

I was able to compare feeding conditions at the start of the monsoon in May with those near the peak in July. In May the air was clear and the water crystal blue; the birds fed in thousands to the northeast, returning in skeins and lines towards dusk. When I approached them on the ground, they disgorged flying fish, large Indian Oil Sardines and other fish, see Appendix.

In July the situation appeared to have changed dramatically. The sea and air were appreciably cooler, the wind was very strong and gusty, raising dust on the island and spume and haze over the sea. Furthermore, the sea had become an opaque green with the abundance of phytoplankton, some of which was being cast up as a green scum along the rocks. Adult boobies were searching the surface from low down, occasionally swooping upwards like a shearwater. When Sooty Gulls and Bridled Terns, also searching the surface, discovered and concentrated over a shoal of fishes, boobies were immediately attracted. They made oblique dives and shallow plunges, sometimes belly-flopping on to the surface like immature boobies, and were clearly fishing from the surface.

The catches disgorged seemed smaller than in May, and sometimes included species such as needlefish. In spite of this, the adults continued to stay with their young as they had in May, even when almost fledged and until quite late in the morning; on occasions both parents stood by. I also found two pairs of large chicks, one pair at least 8 weeks old, which were clearly siblings. From these observations I conclude that the feeding conditions were still good enough for both birds of a pair to obtain their own requirements, and those of two young, without long periods searching at sea.

It was noticeable that all boobies were shy and would rarely allow approach much closer than 20 m without disgorging and taking flight. This may be due to disturbance by villagers, who visit from Al Hallaniyah in calm weather from the end of September, and who call the booby *Dagh* and "our bird" and have a liking for its meat as a change from their otherwise fishy diet. They have also told Dr Miranda Morris and me that they purchase boobies caught by fishermen who visit after the monsoon, and who often dry the meat. The nesting boobies were even more shy in July, when the Sooty Gulls had increased in numbers and harried sitting birds until they rose, uncovered their eggs or chicks, and in wildly attempting to beat off the gulls very often seemed to lose first the fish they disgorged and then the eggs or chicks. My activities were severely limited in order to avoid contributing to the carnage, which I watched from a distance.

**Socotra Cormorant.** Probably these were the "divers" reported in the winter of 1835-1836 on Al Hasikiyah (Hulton 1839-1840), but not recorded there again until March 1964, when Bailey found a few bones near the shore, including one poorly ossified skull "almost certainly the remains of a pre-fledging juvenile". However, birds were not found with eggs until visited by helicopter



in July and October 1977 and in 1978. The numbers seen then hardly accounted for the large winter roosts known in Oman; nesting may therefore be in successive waves, as appears to be the case in the Arabian Gulf, or there may be other breeding stations in Oman. The species also nests on small islands off South Yemen. Called *Sawmi*, it is sometimes caught by Asian workers for food as 'sea duck'. 3,000-5,000 birds were nesting on Al Hasikiyah on 24 September 1984.

**Sooty Gull.** A common breeding visitor to Oman from March to October, with lesser numbers remaining over winter. It nests in large numbers on Al Hallaniyah and Al Sawda; on the former the eggs are collected, and the birds are preyed upon by feral cats. In May 1983 on Al Qibliyah, 200 were roosting on the shore and several were standing amongst the nesting boobies, awaiting their chance to seize food. By July, many more individuals and flocks of up to 30 were harrying the boobies; there were several fresh nest scrapes, and nesting appeared imminent. They also appeared to be about to nest on Al Hasikiyah.

**Crested Tern.** Though some are present around Oman in winter, more are seen on passage and in summer, and nesting begins in July. Bailey suspected nesting on Al Hasikiyah in August 1963. It has nested on Al Sawda and Al Hallaniyah, but the location of the very compact colonies varies. Villagers take some birds and eggs, and Sooty Gulls take eggs and chicks.

**Bridled Tern.** A common migrant and breeding visitor to Oman from March to November, nesting from May. They have been seen feeding off the Kuria Muria islands from April. I found their remains under bushes on Al Qibliyah in April 1978, and pairs at nest sites in May 1983 and with eggs there by 3 July 1983 (one broken eggshell showed that perhaps some had already hatched).

**Common Noddy.** It is occasionally seen along Oman's coasts from May, and I found it nesting on islets of the Daiymaniyat group in July 1978 and June 1981. A small high-tide roost on Masirah island disperses by November. Although von Heuglin reported in 1873 that the Kuria Muria islands "provide the noddies with their favourite breeding haunts", few have been seen there since and none nesting until I found three pairs, one with an egg, on Al Qibliyah on 27 May 1983, and up to ten pairs at nests there in July.

### *Conclusion*

This rather brief account sets out the presently known status of the seabirds on the Kuria Muria islands, and draws attention to their special geographic position and to the importance of the summer monsoon. I have also emphasised the need for more field work throughout the year, and I have drawn attention to some of

the threats which now increasingly face Oman's population of Masked Booby. Desert islands such as the Kuria Muria are natural nature reserves and they deserve to be protected accordingly, though with due regard to the legitimate needs of the islanders.

### *Acknowledgements*

To get to these remote islands, to work on them alone and then to be rescued from them, requires the approval and support of many people, and I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to the Government of Oman, the Armed Forces, the Wali and the islanders, and others who have made my visits possible. My thanks are also due to Dr Miranda Morris for local knowledge, to Lt. Cdr. A. C. F. David for historical records, to Mr M. R. Brown for improving the map, to Dr W. R. P. Bourne for constructive comment on an earlier draft, and a special thanks to Mandy Holloway for examining the unpleasant fish remains.

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TABLE 1

Chronology of visits to the Kuria Muria islands by observers of birds  
(overflights by helicopter are in parentheses)

<i>Observers</i>	<i>Al Hasikiya</i>	<i>Al Sawda</i>	<i>Al Hallaniyah</i>	<i>Gharzant</i>	<i>Al Qibliyah</i>
J. H. Hulton (with S. B. Haines)	—	—	— 14 Dec 1835 to 4 Mar 1836	—	—
T. C. Tilly	20 Nov 1857	—	—	—	Sep-Dec 1857
R. W. Whish	?	—	—	—	Jan 1859
M.Th. von Heuglin	—	—	1860's	—	—
A. C. F. David	—	—	—	—	9 Apr 1954
R. S. Bailey	10 Mar 1964	—	—	—	—
R. H. Daly and M. D. Gallagher	—	—	22 Sep 1976	—	—
S. M. Brogan	13 Jul 1977	—	—	—	—
S.M.B. and M.D.G.	27 Oct 1977	—	—	—	—
W. Heimbach	Mar 1978	—	—	Mar 1978	Mar 1978
M. D. Gallagher	27 Apr 1978	27 Apr 1978	27 Apr 1978	27 Apr 1978	27 Apr 1978
S. M. Brogan	20 Jun 1978	—	—	—	—
R. Townsend	(4 Jul 1978)	—	—	—	—
S.M.B. and M.D.G.	(7 Oct 1978)	7 Oct 1978	(7 Oct 1978)	—	(7 Oct 1978)
M. D. Gallagher	—	—	20-27 Sep 1981	—	25-29 May 1983
—	—	—	25 Oct to	—	—
—	—	—	4 Nov 1982	(3 Jul 1983)	3-7 Jul 1983
(24 Sep 1984)	—	—	24 Sep 1984	—	(24 Sep 1984)
—	—	—	—	—	19 Jan 1985



TABLE 2

Seabirds nesting on the Kuria Muria islands  
(with very approximate numbers of pairs)

<i>Species/Subspecies</i>	<i>Hazikiyah</i>	<i>Sawda</i>	<i>Hallaniyah</i>	<i>Qibliyah</i>	<i>Gharzant</i>	
Jouanin's Petrel <i>Bulweria fallax</i>						Breeding grounds undiscovered, but flocks seen near these islands by Bailey; see text.
Audubon's Shearwater <i>Puffinus lherminieri persicus</i>		?	✓			
Red-billed Tropic-bird <i>Phaethon aethereus indicus</i>			100	100		
Masked Booby <i>Sula dactylatra melanops</i>	3000-5000			5000-8000	100	
Socotra Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>	2000					probably more
Sooty Gull <i>Larus hemprichii</i>	?	500	3000	300		
Crested Tern <i>Sterna bergii velox</i>	?	1000	1000			locality varies
Bridled Tern <i>Sterna anaethetus ? fuligula</i>				2000		
Common Noddy <i>Anous stolidus plumbeigularis</i>			?	10		

*Note.* All are endemic forms. White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa* is also endemic, but nests on inshore islands.

## APPENDIX

FISHES DISGORGED BY SEABIRDS ON AL QIBLIYAH, May and July 1983

### MASKED BOOBY

Indian Oil Sardine *Sardinella longiceps* Valenciennes 1847.

De Kay's Round Herring *Etrumeus teres* (De Kay 1842).

Mirrorwing Flying Fish *Hirundichthys speculiger* (Valenciennes in Cuvier & Valenciennes 1846).

Flying fish sp. *Cheilopogon* sp.

Bullet Tuna *Auxia rochei* (Risso).

Chub Mackerel *Scomber japonicus* Houttuyn 1782.

Indian Horse Mackerel *Trachurus indicus* Neerassov 1966.

Needlefishes Family Belonidae.

### RED-BILLED TROPIC-BIRD

Flying fish sp ? *Hirundichthys* sp., Family Exocoetidae.

Determined by M. Holloway, 9 May 1984,

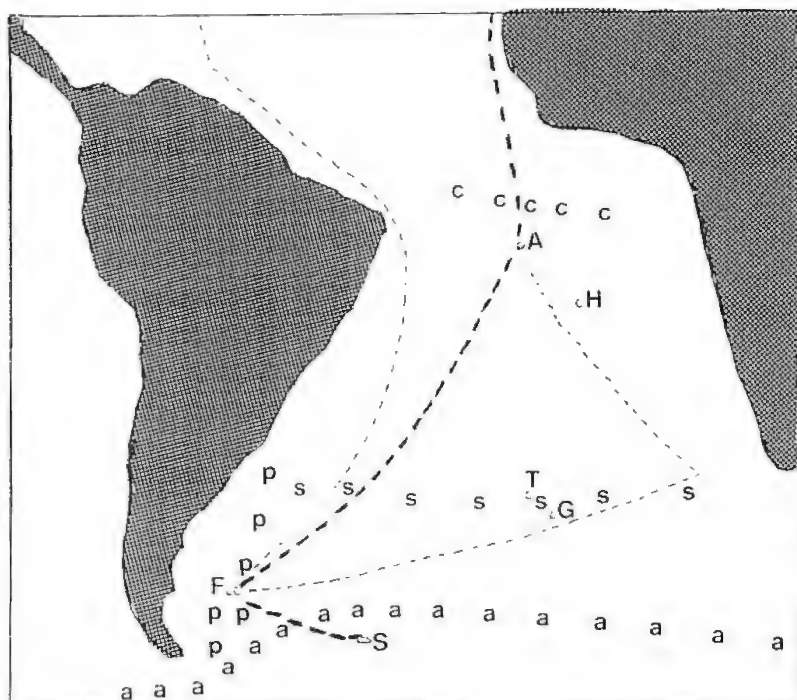
British Museum (Natural History).

## SOUTH ATLANTIC SEABIRDS

By Dr W. R. P. Bourne and W. F. Curtis

Most observations of seabirds in the South Atlantic have been made where the commercial shipping routes from the north cross the fertile waters of the boundary currents off South Africa and South America, or between these places and the Antarctic, and until recently much of the intervening area was seldom visited. Then the conflict in 1982 led to the development of another route used by numerous naval vessels and Royal Fleet Auxiliaries running from Europe via Ascension down the centre of the South Atlantic to the Falklands and South Georgia (Map 1). Admiral Sir Peter Stanford and Commander M. B. Casement, currently President and Chairman of R.N.B.W.S. respectively, promoted the collection of regular bird observations along this route organised initially by Lieutenant M. D. R. Kelly, and these are now beginning to produce substantial results. We shall analyse them in greater detail elsewhere, and we merely propose here to summarise the character of the observations and the main new information on distribution.

At the time of writing in the spring of 1985 reports of birds seen during single voyages of varying length have been received from the following dozen ships, with the names of recorders when known:



Map I: The "motorway" and some alternative routes used in the South Atlantic, with islands and zones of high marine productivity and bird density. A - Ascension, H - St Helena, T - Tristan, G - Gough Island, S - South Georgia, F - Falklands. a - Antarctic convergence, p - edge of Patagonian continental shelf, s - subtropical convergence, c - southern boundary of equatorial counter-current.

H.M.S. *Active*, Feb 83.

H.M.S. *Bristol*, Aug-Dec 83 (Lieutenant-Commander A. Mather and Chief Petty Officer Pringle).

H.M.S. *Broadsword*, Apr-Jul 82 (L.R.O.(G.) N. W. Cottle), May 83 (Lieutenant-Commander M. S. Williams), Aug-Oct 84 (L.M.E.M. Edwards).

H.M.S. *Cardiff*, Jul 82 (Captain M. G. T. Harris).

H.M.S. *Endurance*, 1983/84 (Captain C. MacGregor).

H.M.S. *Exeter*, Feb-Mar 83 (Leading Seaman R. Dodd).

H.M.S. *Hecate*, Aug 82 (Lieutenant-Commander M. K. Barritt).

H.M.T.S. *Keren*, Aug 83 (Dr A. F. G. Dowse).

H.M.S. *Liverpool*, Feb-May 84 (Captain P. B. Rowe).

H.M.S. *Nottingham*, Jan-May 84 (Commander N. R. Essenhigh).

H.M.S. *Penelope*, Feb-May 84 (Lt. I. Greenlees).

R.F.A. *Tidespring*, Mar-May 84.

In addition three observers have made a longer series of more systematic observations extending over more than one voyage:



Radio Officer W. F. Curtis — back notes from passages through the South Atlantic in 1973-74, M.V. *British Test* accompanying the Falkland Task Force in Apr-Jun 82, ten voyages between Ascension and the Falklands in M.V. *Norland* Aug 82-Jan 83, another in H.M.T.S. *Keren* in Jun-Jul 83, and a tour of the South Atlantic in R.F.A. *Olva* Apr-Aug 84, including visits to Gough Island, Tristan and St. Helena in Nov 74, and South Georgia in Jun 82 and Jun and Jul 84.

Ship's Surgeon W. R. P. Bourne — back notes from a visit to Gough Island in Oct-Nov 79, and tours of the South Atlantic in R.F.A. *Olwen* in Jul-Dec 83, R.F.A. *Sir Lancelot* in Apr-Oct 84, and R.F.A. *Olva* in Feb-Jun 85, with visits to South Georgia in Sep and Nov 83, Jun-Jul and Aug-Sep 84, and Apr 85, and Ascension in Oct 84, passing Gough Island again in Feb 85 and the South Shetlands in Mar 85.

Yeoman of Signals B. Bewsher — tours of the South Atlantic in R.F.A. *Fort Austin* in Sep-Nov 83 and Feb-May 84 and R.F.A. *Tidespring* in Oct 84-Feb 85, with visits to South Georgia in Oct 83, Dec 84, and Jan and Feb 85, passing Tristan in Nov 84.

In general it will be seen that most observations have been made in the southern winter and spring, the seasons with fewest in the past. It has also usually been easier to find free time at sea than to get ashore, whereas in the past most work has been done on shore. In consequence the most important new observations have involved an influx of many species to Falkland waters during the hard winter of 1984, and the occurrence of additional species at sea off the places visited. New occurrences within the recently-recognised 200 mile economic zone offshore (which we suggest can also be applied to bird records) are indicated by an asterisk \* with the name or initials of the observer in the following list of species encountered at sea away from recognised breeding sites.

## SEABIRDS

King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*. Seen commonly off South Georgia, occasionally off the Falklands, but not met elsewhere.

Chinstrap Penguin *Pygoscelis antarctica*. Seen occasionally off South Georgia in the winter, notably at least a dozen on the edge of the shelf to the north at 53°44'S 36°45'W on 14 Jun 82 and 53°14'S 35°51'W on 12 Apr 85.

Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua*. Seen out to the edge of the shelf up to 70 miles offshore off both the Falklands and South Georgia, including two at 53°30'S 42°W near Shag Rocks on 30 Nov 84.

Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus*. Seen off South Georgia and at sea along the Antarctic Convergence to the west, for example several at 52°33'S 47°21'W on 3 Sep 83.

Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome*. Seen off the Falklands and Gough Island, and at sea along the subtropical convergence, for example probable birds at 48°54'S 50°38'W on 26 Aug 83 and 43°26'S 43°56'W on 14 Sep 84.

Magellan Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus*. Seen out to the edge of the shelf up to 70 miles from land around the Falklands.

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. Seen regularly in small numbers out at sea between 22°-62°S, but occurred inshore around the Falklands mainly with east winds.

Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*. Normally the commoner great albatross over the shelf around the Falklands, increasing with west winds, seen out to sea to 47°36'S 50°14'W on 3 Oct 84.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*. Most numerous over shelf waters but widespread at sea from 32°S to 62°S. Extremely numerous around fishing boats and pilot whales.

Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. Seen off Gough Island\* in Oct-Nov 79 (WRPB) and the Falklands\* four times between 16 Jun-6 Aug 84 (WFC, WRPB).

Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma*. Widespread out at sea between 32°-62°S, with large numbers following fishing boats south and east of the Falklands in winter, but scarce inshore there.

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*. Seen out at sea between 27°-49°S, but scarce in the south. One at 51°41'S 57°24'W 15 miles east of the Falklands on 30 Sep 83.

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*. Widespread but scarce at sea between 38°-63°S, and not seen inshore away from the breeding-place at South Georgia.

Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*. Widespread but scarce at sea between 31°-45°S, with occasional records further south to one at 53°12'S 61°20'W SW of the Falklands on 11 Mar 85.

Giant Petrels *Macronectes* sp. Widespread at sea between 28°-64°S, with the largest numbers offshore and following ships. Those around the Falklands and Gough Island were normally dark individuals of the southern species *M. giganteus*. Paler and occasional white individuals were widespread at sea and also occurred off the Falklands with east winds notably in the winter of 1984. Northern Giant Petrels *M. halli* were frequent among them north of 54°S, but did not normally occur inshore around the Falklands. It was noticeable that they were usually paler below than those birds seen in the New Zealand area, with dark caps and breast bands.

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides*. Numbers were seen commuting out to sea off Brabant Island west of the Antarctic Peninsula in early March 1985. They arrived off South Georgia and the Falklands in early April, becoming common inshore around the Falklands in the winter, thousands occurring with east winds in the winter of 1984. They were seen north to 43°S in Aug and Nov, and last on 17 Jan.

Cape Pigeon or Petrel *Daption capense*. Small numbers were seen off the Antarctic Peninsula in March and South Georgia in the summer, but they did not appear around the Falklands until early

April. They reached 27°S in August and September, moved south in November, and were last seen in the Falklands on 17 Jan.

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*. These were seen around South Georgia, where they breed, throughout the year, often feeding below the glaciers. A number were also seen at sea between there and the Falklands with hard weather in Jun-Aug 84.

Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*. Two were seen with Snow Petrels in the vicinity of ice at 53°44'S 36°45'W north of South Georgia on 14 Jun 82, and two more by Lewis Clifton feeding below the Hamburg Glacier there on 26 Dec 83. They also occurred at sea between South Georgia and the Falklands in Jun-Aug 84.

Prions *Pachyptila* sp. Many of these birds could not be identified specifically so they will be dealt with together. The most northerly record occurred at 23°S on 17 May. Thousands were regularly seen along the subtropical convergence at about 40°S, many of which appeared to be Broad-billed Prions *P. vittata* although Dove and Slender-billed Prions *P. desolata* and *P. belcheri* were sometimes seen as well, especially in the winter. A vast southward movement of Slender-billed Prions was seen around 45°S 42°W on 23-24 Aug 83, after which they became abundant around the Falklands during the summer, with a few moulting birds off South Georgia, leaving about February. Dove Prions were not seen in force off South Georgia until November, with a few around the Falklands in summer and off the South Shetlands in early March. They appeared to leave later, with a large northward movement, which may have come from the Antarctic, west of the Shag Rocks on 6 Apr 85. Smaller numbers of these two species were also seen at sea and around the Falklands with thousands in the winter of 84. Small numbers of Fairy Prions *P. turtur* were seen along the shelf-break south of the Falklands in the winter and north of South Georgia throughout the year, but they were not detected elsewhere.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*. These were inconspicuous among the more numerous prions at sea in the south in the summer, but became one of the most numerous species remaining there in the winter, when they were also seen north to 39°S. They seldom came inshore around the Falklands, but were among the species more numerous in the winter of 1984.

Atlantic or Schlegel's Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*. An exceptional bird was seen as far north as 1°31'S 38°46'W about 100 miles off the north coast of Brazil on 19 Aug 84 (WFC), and the species has been recorded as far south as 64°S in the Drake Strait in the past, but the main range appeared to lie between 23°-52°S. It seldom came in over shallow water, but birds were seen forty miles east and thirty miles north of the Falklands\* on 1 Nov 83 and 19 Nov 83 (WRPB), and 180 m. NNW and 100 m. west of the



Shag Rocks, South Georgia\* on 3 Jun 82 (WFC) and 2 Nov 83 (WRPB) respectively.

White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*. Seen about a dozen times between 39°-46°S, with one on board a cruise ship off Elsehul, South Georgia\* on the night of 23-24 Dec 83 (S. da Prato), and another eight miles west of Beaver Island in the Falklands on 18 Jul 84.

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. Although the commonest seabird around 35°S 10°W, north-east of Tristan, on 17-19 Feb 85, this species was only seen occasionally between 28°-49°S further west, including three and then six around 49°S 55°W just within 200 miles of the Falklands\* on 19 and 24 Aug 82 (WFC).

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. Seen regularly between 11°-52°S, with one at 19°01'S 6°42'W within 200 miles of St. Helena\* on 10 Apr 73 (WFC), a number around South Georgia and the Falklands in the late summer, and at least four at 60°32'S 61°41'W off the South Shetlands\* on 9 Mar 85 (WRPB and T. Godfrey). Many of the birds appeared rather dark above, this becoming more marked later in the season, but only one in many hundreds was entirely dark below.

Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris*. One of the commonest species in the Southern Ocean south of 40°S throughout the year, especially off the edge of the continental shelves, coming inshore regularly around South Georgia, where one was seen among breeding petrels dispersing at dawn west of the Willis Islands on 3 Nov 83. It also occurred occasionally with easterly winds around the Falklands, with scores in the winter of 1984.

Herald or Trindade Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*. It does not appear to be widely recognised that a serious identification problem occurs with this species through the extreme similarity of the smaller skuas in incomplete plumage. There were some eight possible records between 3°-28°S and 16°-31°W including seven in a feeding flock of seabirds 180 miles SSW of Ascension\* on 2 Oct 82 (WFC).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*. It was not appreciated in the past that this species regularly disperses far south of the equator in the northern winter. We have fourteen records of up to eight in a day between 6°-39°S and 17°-37°W during Dec-Feb, including one at 5°34'N 15°00'W within 200 miles of Ascension\* on 10 Feb 85 (WRPB).

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. One of the most widespread species, seen in limited numbers between 25°-53°S throughout the year, including several of the spectacled birds which breed on Inaccessible Island, Tristan, in the north.

Grey or Brown Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*. Up to eighty a day seen far out at sea between 38°-53°S, also one at 50°42'S 58°43'W,

3 miles north of the Falklands\*, on 21 Mar 85, and two within ten miles of the Shag Rocks, South Georgia\* on 6 Apr 85 (WRPB).

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. Scores were seen over fish-shoals along the border of the equatorial counter-current within 200 miles north of Ascension\* and up to 18 seen in a day south to 48°S between Nov-Feb. The distinctive small race *C. d. edwardsii* of the Cape Verde Islands was identified several times south to 24°S, but only the larger northern races were seen further south (WRPB).

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. This was the only common southern species which was not seen in the winter. What appeared to be the breeding birds appeared flying south-east on a line leading directly from the north-west Atlantic past the Horn of Brazil to Tristan in September, when they became numerous between 35°-45°S, although only a few were seen further south over deep water. Non-breeders were seen returning south off West Africa in early December, after which the species became numerous, often in moult, further south over submarine ridges and the continental shelves west of South Georgia and around the Falklands, where they were the commonest shearwater by April. Large numbers were seen returning north on the line leading to the Horn of Brazil again in May.

Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus*. In marked contrast to the previous species these were found locally in very variable numbers out at sea in the Southern Ocean throughout the year, eighteen still occurring in the presence of ice at 53°44'S 36°45'W off the north coast of South Georgia\* on 14 Jun 82 (WFC), and hundreds at times around the Falklands in the winter of 1984. Smaller numbers also appeared to follow a route similar to the adult Great Shearwaters, possibly leaving a little earlier, towards the end of March, and returning a little earlier, about August, although no late movement of non-breeders was detected. They may summer further north, perhaps off South Africa.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. Seen regularly in small numbers between 38°-50°S.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. Very widely but patchily distributed throughout the area for much of the year. Temporarily numerous, perhaps on migration south, off the Falklands in mid-Nov, scarcer off there and South Georgia in summer, with an increase possibly due to northward migration in mid-March. Seen occasionally in the south throughout the winter and also ten miles north of Ascension\* on 28 Nov 83 (WRPB).

Grey-backed Storm-petrel *Garrodia nereis*. First noticed off the Falklands on 21 Oct, where it occurred widely both over the shelf and out to sea in summer, with an increase possibly due to migration in early March, last seen on 27 May. Not recorded elsewhere.

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*. Seen occasionally in a limited area between 39°-45°S Nov-Feb.

Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*. Common off South Georgia in summer and the South Shetlands in early March, and a number were seen, possibly on northward migration, between South Georgia and the Falklands in early April. They were very scarce off the Falklands, with three records in Nov, Dec and Jul. Occasional birds were seen at sea throughout the remainder of the area north to Ascension\*, where one was seen 50 miles to the north on 24 Jun 82 (WFC) and one 30 miles to the south on 16 Aug 83 (WRPB).

White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*. Seen rather commonly at sea between 28°-50°S during Sep-Feb, and also in May.

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*. Seen fairly frequently over the equatorial counter-current, around Ascension, and south to 16°S.

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. Seen commonly over the equatorial counter-current from Nov until at least Feb, when one flew around the vessel when it anchored off Ascension\* on the 11th (T. Godfrey and WRPB), and diminishing numbers were seen to 35°10'S 10°54'E on the 19th in 1985.

Diving-petrels *Pelecanoides* sp. These were widespread south of 40°S, frequent off the Falklands and numerous off South Georgia throughout the year, with several large, greyish birds resembling the Common Diving-petrel *P. urinatrix* occurring around the Falklands beyond the shelf-break off the South Shetlands\* on 9 Mar 85 (WRPB and T. Godfrey). Thousands of small, compact, very black-and-white birds, possibly Georgian Diving-petrels *P. georgicus*, were also seen approaching South Georgia from the west on the morning of 8 Sep 83, and hundreds were seen returning west in the same area on the afternoon of 12 Apr 85, which suggests that in contrast to the Common Diving-petrel, which appears to frequent the breeding area throughout the year, the Georgian Diving-petrel may be a migrant, possibly wintering around South America.

Yellow-billed Tropic-bird *Phaethon lepturus*. One at 16°23'S 10°23'W on 13 Feb 85.

Boobies *Sula* sp. Brown and Masked Boobies *S. leucogaster* and *S. dactylatra* were seen in diminishing numbers, sometimes in mixed flocks, up to 300 miles from Ascension. In addition one Brown Booby was seen at 21°18'S 23°16'W on 12 May 84.

Ascension Frigate-bird *Fregata aquila*. Scores were seen around Ascension, including numerous immatures (which are fed by the adults) over the shore, the adults feeding over the Sooty Tern colony and over fish-shoals (which they found before the other seabirds which they are reputed to parasitise) up to 150 miles away at sea.



Imperial Shag *Phalacrocorax atriceps*. Parties were encountered with decreasing frequency up to at least 30 miles out to sea around the Falklands, Shag Rocks and South Georgia. The birds feeding in the northern approaches to Falkland Sound were also prepared to commute at least 30 miles to roost at night on the Eddystone Rock offshore.



White-faced Storm Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*  
at sea of the Salvages, 16 July 1984

*Photo: A. M. Teixeira*

Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis alba*. An early migrant was reported to have been killed by a Crested Caracara *Polyborus plancus* and devoured on board H.M.S. *Penelope* on 28 Mar 84. Migrants became commoner at sea in April and May and were reported returning from 14 Aug to 16 Nov. One which reached Britain is said to have been assisted by a Chinese crew.

Large skuas or bonxies *Catharacta* sp. Birds resembling dark northern Great Skuas *C. skua* were seen in limited numbers around the Falklands, South Georgia and Gough Island in summer, a few remaining for the winter, when they became commoner at sea. They were commonest along the subtropical convergence at 40°S, but occurred as far north as 4°S 15°30'W, 200 miles north of Ascension, as late as 29 Nov 83. Some ten birds with paler bodies, presumably the pale phase of the South Polar Skua *C. mac-cormicki*, were also seen widely scattered at sea north to 38°S, including one at 48°55'S 55°06'W, 200 miles north-east of the Falklands\* on 11 May 84 (WFC). There were no reports of birds with the markedly rufous underparts found in the Chilean Skua *C. chilensis* (although it has incidentally been collected in the Falklands in the past).

Small skuas or jaegers *Stercorarius* sp. These were also thinly but very widely distributed at sea in various intermediate plumages which made them hard to identify. While all three species were reported to about 50°S, Pomarine Skuas *S. pomarinus* were recorded most often in the tropics, notably three times along the edge of the equatorial counter-current around 5°S 15°W, about 200 miles north of Ascension\*, on 16 Feb and 29 Nov 83 and 10 Feb 85 (H.M.S. *Antrim*, WRPB). WFC also saw no less than 37 off St. Helena on 21 Nov 74. Up to 35 Arctic Skuas *S. parasiticus* were also seen following fish-shoals, including three seventy miles north of Ascension\* on 8 May 84 (WRPB), and an adult in Port Stanley in the Falklands\* on 15 Nov 82 (WFC). Eleven Long-tailed Skuas *S. longicaudus* were seen at 10°29'S 16°04'W, 180 miles SSW of Ascension\* on 2 Oct 82, two off St. Helena\* on 21 Nov 74, and four (two adults) around Stanley in the Falklands\* on 11 and 29 Nov 82 (WFC).

Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus*. Regularly seen up to 30 miles out to sea around the Falklands and South Georgia, and twice, in May and Jun 82, when the Falkland Task Force spent nearly three weeks around 51°S 51°W, 250 miles offshore to the east.

Dolphin or Magellan Gull *Larus scoresbii*. Seen in the harbours of the Falklands in the winter, and one in a snowstorm five miles off Cumberland Bay, South Georgia\* on 11 Apr 85 (WRPB).

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. Three at 11°20'S 17°00'W and an immature at 39°20'S 37°30'W on 17 and 28 Dec 82.

Terns *Sterna* sp. South American Terns *S. hirundinacea* and Antarctic Terns *S. vittata* were seen around the Falklands and

South Georgia respectively throughout the year, sometimes gathering in hundreds in the summer but usually dispersed in smaller numbers in the winter. Neither was definitely identified elsewhere, although they may have been present among the pale terns scattered widely at sea throughout the area for much of the year. Most of these appear to have been Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea*, however, which were also identified off both the previous places, and also at 19°01'S 6°43'W, 180 miles SSW of St. Helena\*, on 10 Apr 73, and 10°29'S 16°04'W, 180 miles SSW of Ascension\*, on 2 Oct 82 (WFC).

Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata*. These were sometimes widespread around Ascension, notably when they were breeding late in 1983 and in the middle of 1984, and in flocks feeding over fish-shoals along the equatorial counter-current to the north. One such flock seen at 3°12'S 15°10'W on 26 Apr 82 included, in addition to at least 75 Sooty and 25 Arctic Terns, five Common and three Roseate Terns *S. hirundo* and *S. dougallii*. Closer to Ascension these feeding flocks were also joined by occasional White Terns *Gygis alba* and Common or Brown Noddies *Anous stolidus* close to the shore, and larger numbers of White-capped or Black Noddies *A. minutus* up to fifty miles out to sea.

## LANDBIRDS

To complete the record, a limited number of landbirds were also encountered at sea. Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, which have explosively colonised the Americas in the last few decades, were by far the most numerous, occurring some twenty times between 39°-61°S from mid-March to late May. Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* came on board twice off the Falklands in 1984, including an immature on 30 Mar, which caught a prion and eventually stayed a week, and an adult on 18 April which caught a Wilson's Storm-petrel. A Rufous-chested Dotterel *Zonibyx modestus* was seen 200 miles west of the Falklands on 7 Sep 74. Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were seen at 38°44'S 42°19'W on 4 Nov 82, ten miles east of the Falklands on 26th Oct 83, and at 45°25'S 46°34'W on 2 Oct 84. Chilean Swallows *Tachycineta leucopyga* were seen at 62°S 50°W on 13 Feb, and 60 miles south of the Falklands on 11 Mar 85, and an unidentified hirundine at 33°34'S 36°40'W on 3 Nov 82. Dark-faced Ground-tyrants *Muscisaxicola macloviana* (thought to be sedentary) occurred at sea off the Falklands on 4 Apr 84 and 26 Mar 85, a Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis* 30 miles south of the Falklands on 12 Mar 85, a possible Correndera Pipit *Anthus correndera* 10 miles east of the Falklands on 14 Sep 83, and a small unidentified passerine 60 miles south of the Falklands on 11 Mar 85.





## ORIENT EXPRESS

Part III: November 1983 - February 1984

By Lieutenant-Commander P. T. Jackson, R.N.

This final report\* from the Royal Navy Task Group deployed to the Far East comes from H.M.S. *Rothesay*. It covers the periods spent in Auckland, New Zealand and the subsequent passage via Brisbane, Tonga, Fiji, the Solomons, Papua New Guinea to Hong Kong. Regrettably, towards the end of this period H.M.S. *Invincible*'s engineering problem finally forced her early return to Portsmouth.

### NEW ZEALAND AND PASSAGE TO BRISBANE

23 November-22 December 1983

H.M.S. *Rothesay* was the first H.M. Ship to call at New Zealand for four years. Our reception was enthusiastic and friendly, not marred in the least by the attentions of the 'Peace' protesters. These individuals were both outnumbered and out-maneuvred by the police patrol craft and hence did not delay our entry but only made it more colourful. Despite these diversions it was noticed that a large number of terns identified as White-fronted Terns *Sterna striata* were present, as were considerable numbers of Southern Black-backed Gulls *Larus dominicanus* and New Zealand Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae scopulinus*. Almost level with the main city docks a Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans* was being mobbed by Silver Gulls.

The ship received lavish hospitality during our stay, with many and varied opportunities to explore the countryside. As the visit was designated an Assisted Maintenance Period (AMP) with Portsmouth Fleet Maintenance Unit in attendance, there was some difficulty in reconciling the wishes of our prospective hosts and the demands of our machinery. Journeys around the Auckland suburbs showed a surprising lack of diversity in the bird life. The Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis* predominates; this aggressive,

\*Part I by Lieutenant-Commander D. C. K. Roberts, R.N. of H.M.S. *Achilles* and Part II by Captain R. A. Smith, R.N. of H.M.S. *Invincible* were published in *Sea Swallow* 33: 4-11. Ed.

gregarious, jaunty but unlovable bird, first released in the South Island, has now colonised the North Island as far as the Bay of Plenty and is still spreading. Other birds seen in addition to inevitable feral pigeons included, the European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*, which breeds only in Auckland. The others, all released in the 1860's, are now some of the most familiar New Zealand birds.

Further afield, during a day spent on a small New Zealand farm, more introductions were evident: the Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*. All these species were introduced during the latter half of the 19th century as the white settlers cleared the natural forest to create pasture. Ideal conditions for them were thus established and they thrived as New Zealand did not possess a rich variety of passerines to compete with them. Also very common is the Syklark *Alauda arvensis* which was in early song. Whether these birds will stand up to the competition of the Mynah is debatable, but interestingly the farmers are already providing for the Starlings nesting boxes whose holes are not big enough for the Mynah. The Starling is valued as a pest destroyer. Another introduction noted was the White-backed Magpie *Gymnorhina hypoleuca*, an import from Australia in the late 1800's, which was seen on all journeys in considerable numbers performing the same function, in competition with the Mynah, as does the Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* on English motorways. The indigenous birds noted include the Pukeko or Swamp Hen *Porphyrio melanotus* which is very common in all wetland areas. It is aggressive and said to be quite ruthless in establishing and retaining the group territory for its polygamous lifestyle. The Fernbird *Bowdleria punctata*, New Zealand Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, the Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*, first recorded in 1953 but now very common throughout the North Island, were also seen. On the coast and in the estuaries the range of bird life increases. Unfortunately, other than positive identification of the Variable Oystercatcher *Haemanotopus unicolor*, of which a black form was also sighted, and the Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*, I was not competent enough to identify precisely the variety of stilts, sandpipers, plovers, etc., seen on the mudflats to the east of Auckland. However, at the Bay of Plenty beach Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* were a frequent sight. Further evidence of the diversity at the coast was apparent as the ship made its way out of Auckland past Little and Great Barrier Island and around Three Kings. We were soon in the company of the Australian Gannet *Sula serrator* which nests in considerable numbers on the Barrier Islands. As Great Barrier was approached great numbers of Parkinson's Petrels *Procellaria parkinsoni* were sighted and Grey-backed Shearwaters *Puffinus bulleri* could always be seen on my frequent visits to the bridge. Also off Great Barrier

two types of diving bird were observed, one almost certainly the Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor*, the other a species of diving-petrel, probably *Pelecanoides urinatrix*. Further north a Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cooki* was sighted and in the area of the Three Kings numbers of Great-winged Petrels *Pterodroma macroptera*, Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*, White-faced Storm-petrel *Pterodroma marina* and flocks of shearwaters, almost certainly the Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*.

Hence we left New Zealand, unique in its bird life on many counts, not least for the 1500 mile overlap in the range between the penguin and parrot families. Although the indigenous mainland bird life has been decimated by the actions of the Polynesian and white settlers it is said to be thriving on the islands. I will always regret I was unable to visit these outposts.

On passage to Brisbane the inevitable crop of post-maintenance defects occurred. These and the need rapidly to plan and carry out a major replenishment at sea with R.F.A. *Regent* did not allow many birdwatching opportunities. However, an immature Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* kept company for most of the passage and Black-browed Albatrosses *Diomedea melanophrys* were seen frequently during the first two days.

BRISBANE December 1983-January 1984

We made our entry in fine weather and as we proceeded through Moreton Bay it was soon apparent that it teemed with fish. Up river a number of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* resplendent in buff breeding plumage were feeding along the banks. During the visit these birds were present in great numbers on any area of wet or flooded grasslands and were easily the commonest heron seen during our stay. A Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Catutua galeriba* was sighted as it made a sedate passage over a large warehousing complex.

The ship berthed at H.M.A.S. *Moreton* very close to the centre of the city. The next day, at great expense, my wife and two younger children joined me, very pale and exceedingly tired after their 25-hour journey. We planned to spend Christmas quietly in the immediate area of the city and then tour in a caravan to the north, hopefully reaching the southern edge of the Barrier Reef. During the Christmas celebrations, at an unguarded moment, I recruited the children to assist with my birdwatching role. A purchase of Volume 1 of Peter Slater's 'A Field Guide to Australian Birds' could then be made; however my wife's indulgence had limits and would not allow the purchase of Volume 2 (passerines).

A description of this marvellous holiday would run to many pages, but I will concentrate on the birdwatching aspects. In the immediate area of Brisbane a short stop at a large fresh water lake, well stocked with fish, turtles and eels allowed identification of the



White Egret *Egretta alba*, Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*, Eastern Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* and Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*; these birds were always to be seen in such habitats. Further north, at a similar location, at Gympie, Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata* were also present. On open areas of grassland in and around Brisbane the White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca* was common and seemed to have come to terms with urban life. One bird was only ten yards from a busy road, another feeding unconcerned in a small municipal park in the centre of the city. The Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis* was also present but it appears to frequent less populated areas. Both Australian species of Kookaburra, the Laughing *Dacelo gigas* and the Blue-winged *Dacelo leachii* were in evidence as was the Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* and many other unidentified passerines. Moreton Bay had a large number of seabirds. Regular sightings of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* and Caspian Terns as well as large numbers of Silver Gulls and Crested Terns were made.

A visit to Rainbow Beach some 125 miles north of Brisbane was memorable as we were held up by a bush fire for 2 hours, we saw our first shark and observed at close quarters the luxurious life style of the Australian camper with family-sized fridge, the odd potted plant, television, etc. Other than a few Crested Terns the seabird life was very sparse. This may have been due to the presence on the cliffs of a breeding pair of Brahminy Kites *Haliastur indus* which we approached to within 20 paces. We also had our first sighting of the Little Eagle *Haliaeetus morphnoides* which was driven off, or moved away, as a result of attentions by the kites.



Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae*

Photo: David Brown

On our return to the Bruce Highway through 50 km of gum forest a group of about 20 black cockatoos, almost certainly the Red-tailed *Calyptrorhynchus magnificus* were sighted, their raucous calls drawing our attention above the engine noise, although they were some 200 yards away.

Further north at the family holiday resort of Hervey Bay the bird life was prolific. This bay, developed commercially as a family resort in the last 10 years, is renowned for its fishing, wind surfing, sailing, safe swimming and coral reefs. It boasts of a large population of Australian Pelicans *Pelecanus conspicillatus* and a number of breeding pairs of the White-breasted Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*. Both birds had taken a liking to the tall wooden piles in the busy harbour, and the pelicans showed a surprising degree of aerodynamic skill as they stalled to alight on these, or on street lamp posts. Black (or Common) Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* and Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* were also noted. The wide beaches and the shallows near the harbour were populated by a large variety of waders: Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* and numerous smaller waders which I was unable to identify. Walks in the town were always carried out to the accompaniment of the screeches and chatter of Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus*, subsequently identified as being present from the Gold Coast (south of Brisbane) to the northern extent of our travels at Gladstone. The familiar Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus* and the strikingly grey and pink plumaged Galah *Eolophus roseicapillus* (to be seen feeding on the grass of a playing field) were also common. A river cruise towards Maryborough along mangrove-covered banks allowed observation of the Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*, Mangrove Heron *Butorides striatus*, Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* and White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*. At night owls and frogmouths were much in evidence and at a barbecue site a positive identification of the Owlet-nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus* was made.

At no other time during our journeys did we observe such numbers or range of bird life. Indeed, drives along the two-lane Bruce Highway, which passes through predominantly gum forest areas, were disappointingly sparse in bird and animal life, relieved only occasionally by the sight of a circling hawk, the inevitable White-backed Magpie, the odd Kookaburra, and in swampy areas Cattle Egrets and White-faced Herons. The highlight was a distant sighting of an Emu *Dromolus novaehollandiae*.

Unlike New Zealand, surprisingly large areas of the natural habitat along the coastal belt remain intact and introduced species were rarely seen; presumably the early settlers had little reason to introduce reminders of the old world. Strict import and export regulations exist and steps are being taken this year to register cage birds. Hence I feel that in relation to other areas of the world the future of Australian indigenous bird life is reasonably assured.

BRISBANE TO HONG KONG via TONGA, FIJI, SOLOMONS  
and PAPUA NEW GUINEA 4 January-8 February 1984

The ship sailed from Brisbane in fine weather and the passage to Tonga was uneventful although Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta* and a number of shearwaters were sighted. A Lesser Frigate-bird *Fregata ariel* was seen circling at a great height the day before arriving at Tonga. Nuka'alofa was notable because of the large number (some groups exceeding 50) of White-capped Noddies *Anous minutus* present but, except for a few single Crested Terns, was devoid of all birds other than the Common Mynah. The diversity of indigenous bird species on the South Sea Islands appears to diminish the further east one goes, with approximately 150 species on the Solomons and probably none at all on Easter Island — only introductions. The ship was anchored off the town for both days and this visit set the pattern for our island-hopping journey: maximum time in any one harbour was two days with a cocktail party on arrival followed the next day by receptions ashore. As I can still keep a place in the ship's cricket team, time for birdwatching was minimal.

The King of Tonga has evidently taken steps to increase the Islands' range of birds and these include the introduction of kingfishers. On hearing this at the British High Commissioner's residence I expressed some surprise as Tonga has no streams on the main island. At that point a brilliant kingfisher, probably a New Zealand Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*, alighted on the lawn; the King is obviously having considerable success.

Next to Fiji; more frigate-birds were sighted as we approached Suva and also a number of Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster*, Crested Terns and Black-naped Terns *Sterna sumatrana*. Ashore, the dominant species was again the Mynah, introduced to keep down the insect population on the plantations; huge flocks were to be seen on all open areas. However, at a Suvan hotel a pair of Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* and an unidentified flower-pecker seemed to be surviving despite considerable harassment from the aggressive Mynahs.

Approaching the Solomons we passed through a large group of Brown Boobies in company with Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra*. Off Honiara I acted as aircrew on a flight to pick up the High Commissioner. Flying at between 200 and 400 feet over the thick jungle and palm-fringed coast was an exciting experience and it was apparent that the life of the rural Solomon Islander had been largely untouched by western influence. Canoes are still fashioned from logs and houses constructed from bamboo frames, clad and thatched with palm leaves. Their main occupations seemed to be fishing, collecting copra and tending their vegetable patches. Large numbers of brilliantly coloured parrots were sighted in the canopy. Pairs with one red and one green bird were easily identifiable as the



Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus* (female and male respectively and known in the Solomons as the King Parrot). Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were also noted in large numbers and groups of brilliant red parrots were subsequently identified as Cardinal Lory *Eos cardinalis*. Each stream or river estuary appeared to have its attendant heron, either White-faced Heron or Reef Heron. On landing at Henderson Airport a Rufus-breasted Hawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae* was hunting close to the runway.

The topography of the immediate area of Honiara consists of a narrow palm-fringed beach and then for half a mile reasonably flat scrub and palm-wooded terrain which then rises in a series of steep grass-covered hills each one higher as one proceeds inland. It is this topography that caused the Americans so much trouble in the battle for Guadalcanal, and the rusting remains of Japanese and American equipment litter the area. One rating is now the proud owner of a Japanese machine-gun. The First Lieutenant graciously refused to accept the gift from Sub-Lieutenants under Training of a Dauntless' tail plane, recovered on a river expedition.

The High Commissioner was then transported to the Russel Islands, Tulugi, Auki, Gizo and Guadalcanal. Only brief stops of less than a day were made except for a two-day visit to Honiara on Guadalcanal.

At Auki, Crested and Black-naped Terns were often seen. An expedition to a local village revealed that Long-billed Corella *Cacatua tenuirostris* were present, as a young specimen had been caught by the village children. It also confirmed the impression gained whilst flying over Guadalcanal of the Solomons' village life; pagan customs are still practised, village history, although not recorded, is retained by the witch doctor's memory and kept alive by ritual. Shell money (130 Australian dollars for a ten-foot length if sold in Papua New Guinea) is still used for transactions such as bride purchase. The people were delightfully friendly and had a great affection and respect for England and The Crown. (Could this affection be due to the fact that we haven't tried drastically to alter their way of life, unlike the other nations involved in this area?)

The visit showed an even greater variety of birds than in Fiji. The dreaded Mynah was in residence, but large numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets and individual sightings of the brilliant Cardinal Lory were a frequent sight. Also identified were the Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*, Colonial Starling *Aplonis metallica*, Small Guadalcanal Honeyeater *Myzomela melanocephala*, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis*, Willie Wagtail, Pied Monarch *Monarcha barbatus*. During a trip outside the town a Banded Rail *Rallus philippensis* was seen scurrying across the road and a Papuan Hornbill *Rhyticeros plicatus* was sighted at a distance. A four-hour visit to one of the Russel Islands then followed, where a Sandford Eagle *Haliaeetus sanfordi* flew over the ship. At the island of Gizo a Whiskered Swift *Hemiprocnis mystacea* was seen. The Solomons, although hectic socially (six

receptions onboard in five days), were to my mind the most successful and interesting of all our visits. I intend to return.

On entry into Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, a number of Greater Frigate-birds *Fregata minor* were wheeling over the harbour. The Little, Lesser-crested and Crested Terns were also present, and a Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* was seen. The town however was strangely quiet and it took some time to realise that it appeared to be completely devoid of birds; no sparrows at the docks, no pigeons and, more importantly, no Mynahs. This was very odd as a rich variety of bird life was present at the cricket match played some 15 miles away from the town centre. These included numerous shrikes and swallows, Willie Wagtail, Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*, and Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianinus*, and a group of Masked Plover *Vanellus miles* took over the pitch when the predictable 3 o'clock rainstorm interrupted the match.

The birdwatching highlight of this visit was an expedition to the Varirata National Park in the company of Brian Finch to look for the Raggana Bird of Paradise; this is a national emblem, with its long red tail plumes, yellow head and green plumages. Brian, who had just completed a book on Papua New Guinea birds, proved to be a most informative and patient guide both to myself and the party of young ratings who joined us. We did not see the bird of paradise, only its close relative the Buff-breasted Bowerbird, but during a two-hour walk through the forest sightings were made of Chestnut-bellied Fantail, Little Shrike-thrush, Frilled Monarch, Spot-winged Monarch, White-shouldered Fairy Wren and many others. These birds were seen in mixed groups moving through the forest with each type of bird seeking its own food source, but in doing so disturbing the other birds' food supply and thus conferring an advantage to them. At the end of the walk in more open country a Rufous-breasted Kookaburra was spotted and Hooded Butcher-birds were much in evidence. At the end of a breathtaking escarpment overlooking the plain towards Port Moresby a Brahminy Kite was patrolling the cliff face, and 1,000 feet below Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were present in the forest canopy.

We returned to the ship before 1200 but all considered this trip worthwhile. In conversation later a possible reason for the lack of town bird life emerged. Evidently on the butchers' market stalls a large variety of birds were on sale; all showed a dark stain on their bills.

The passage to Hong Kong was uneventful, with the last four days in low visibility and rough seas. This, and the preparations for the coming Self Maintenance Period (SMP) and the need to write the defect list for our Docking and Essential Defect Maintenance (DED) period did not allow further time to be spent birdwatching.

Lt. Cdr. P. T. Jackson, R.N., Bridge House, Charlton Mackrel, Somerton, Somerset.

## REPORTS OF SEABIRDS RECEIVED IN 1973-77

### PART II

By Dr W. R. P. Bourne

(Ed. The introduction, list of observers and voyages and Part I of this report appeared in *Sea Swallow* 33: 39-53)

#### STORM-PETREL *HYDROBATIDAE*

There are numerous records of Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* from both the Atlantic and Indian Ocean, but few from the Pacific, where it is apparently equally widespread but is less often reported, and possibly does not spread so far north. The maximum was thousands seen in the approaches to the Strait of Bab el Mandeb by ASY on 3 Aug 77, and 45 were also seen by PWGC further east at 5°55'N 89°16'E on 10 Aug 73. In this area WW also saw one at 4°56'N 98°14'E in the northern Malacca Strait on 28 Jun 77, and MKB had one aboard at 8°05'S 122°27'E near Timor on 22 Oct 73, and saw twelve at 10°15'S 139°28'E in the Arafura Sea on the 18th. RPC saw both Wilson's Storm-petrel and two of its close ally Elliot's Storm-petrel *O. gracilis* at 15°30'S 77°03'W off Peru on 25 Mar 76; the last has now finally been found breeding by R. P. Schlatter in a clump of herbage on an islet off the coast of Chile.

Up to 3000 White-faced Storm-petrels *Pelagodroma marina* were recorded daily by JJ between 34°S 126°E and 35°S 135°E off Southern Australia between 4-9 Oct 71, when one came on board. Wintering birds from this population were reported in the Indian Ocean at 5°02'N 52°53'E off Somalia by PWGC on 27 May 74 and ten miles south of Egmont Id in the Chagos group by WFC on 10 Oct 74. Birds were also seen in the Tristan area in the South Atlantic, and off West Africa at 20°25'N 17°51'W by JWWa on 24 Sep 74 and 30°06'N 15°02'W by AJP on 14 Jun 76.

The White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria* was also reported from the same area in the South Atlantic and adjacent Indian Ocean, and wintering in the Indian Ocean north to 19°01'N 64°24'E by PWGC on 30 Jun 75 and 15°49'S 40°43'E by WFC on 22 Sep 74. PC reported four at 4°26'S 52°26'E on 13 Aug 75 and MKB a number at 31°42'S 155°26'E in the Tasman Sea on 4 Oct 73. RPC reported four Black-bellied Storm-petrels *F. tropica* in an unusual area, 46°12'S 75°41'W off the coast of Chile on 18 Mar 76, and PC an unidentified *Fregetta* at 8°32'S 67°53'E on 9 Jul 75.

The often questionable sight records of Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* are reinforced by numerous reports of the occurrence of dark, white-rumped storm-petrels which have come on board ships and usually appear to refer to this species. MKB saw three at 60°28'N 10°15'W off the Hebrides on 1 Aug 73, Capt. F. W. Lamb had one aboard at 46°N 9°W in the Bay of Biscay on 5 Nov 73, Capt. A. Dals one at 42°N 36°W in mid-Atlantic on 19 Sep



74, and M. Wood one at 42°30' N 55°W further west on 12 Nov 74. Further south PKK saw twenty between 15°30'N 26°45'W and 28°N 28°W off West Africa during 24-27 Apr 72. N. J. Palmer had one on board at 2°23'N 8°22'W on 6 Jan 76, PKK saw another at 4°S 33°W on 22 Dec 69, DS another at 19°33'S 4°54'E on 30 Mar 75, KS four at 18°15'S 11°30'E on 1 Dec 73. Capt. L. E. Howell provides a description of one which came on board as far SE as 38°36'S 35°56'E in the southern Indian Ocean on 4 Jul 76, presumably an immature bird summering in the southern hemisphere where there are a few similar records, including a recent report by M. J. Imber of two displaying ashore in the Chatham Islands.

In the eastern Pacific Capt. L. Henshall had a Leach's Storm-petrel on board at 18°N 103°W on 14 Mar 74, Capt. O. T. Tucker one at 39°N 171°W on 16 Aug 74, and Capt. J. W. D. John one at 19°04'N 127°10'E on 8 Mar 75. DHM reported numbers at 42°N 172°E and 35°N 148°E on 26 and 30 May 73, and two or three dark storm-petrels which may have been the dark-rumped Lower Californian race of Leach's *O. l. chapmani* at 7°N 82°W and 9°N 86°W on 4-5 Feb 73. WW reported a similar bird which may have been its western Pacific representative, Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *O. monorhis*, in its winter quarters near the Anamba Is in the South China Sea on 12 May 77, PWGC one at 2°56'N 100°59'E in the northern Malacca Strait on 6 May 74, and PC one at 4°17'S 51°18'E in the western Indian Ocean on 12 Aug 75.

There are several reports of the larger dark storm-petrels. DHM reports what were probably 11 Tristram's Storm-petrels *O. tristrami* at 27°N 148°E on 22 Apr 73 and again at 29°N 154°E next day, with one at 49°30'N 169°W on 22 May. KS reported a Black Storm-petrel *O. melania* at 19°05'N 105°14'W on 17 Mar 77, and JWWa 30 large dark storm-petrels, which seem likely to be its west Pacific representative Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *O. matsudairae*, at 25°14'N 137°53'E on 23 May 74, ten in the wake at 31°28'N 135°20'E on 18 Feb 76, and 20 at 31°N 133°25'E on 21 Apr 76, while PWGC saw three at 35°52'N 141°19'E on 26 Apr 74. In its wintering quarters in the Indian Ocean JWWa saw ten in the wake at 13°43'S 112°E on 29 Aug 74, and WFC three at 10°21'S 40°47'E on 23 Sep 54.

Among other reports KS also saw thousands of Fork-tailed Storm-petrels *O. furcata* at 48°25'N 150°38'E in the Sea of Okhotsk on 24 Sep 73, and a number of people recorded Madeiran Storm-petrels *O. castro* in a variety of places with inadequate details to establish the identification. It should be noted that while the last species seems to be quite widespread in the tropical Atlantic in particular, it does not in fact have a "direct, fast" flight as reported by Tuck, but a distinctive corkscrew motion, while it is seldom the only dark, white-rumped storm-petrel found in any area as implied by some observers, but usually has to be distinguished from not just one but several similar species, most of which are commoner wherever it is seen.

## DIVING-PETRELS *PELECANOIDIDAE*

While there are no significant records it may be useful to direct attention to an important study of the difference between the two most similar species, the Common and Georgian Diving-petrels *Pelecanoides urinatrix* and *P. georgicus*, where they occur together at South Georgia, by M. R. Payne and P. A. Prince (*New Zealand J. Zool.* 6:299-318). They report that while it is virtually impossible to tell them apart at sea, at the breeding sites adult *P. urinatrix* may normally be distinguished by the fact that it has a darker underwing with dark shafts to the coverts, the back of the tarsus blue, the bill 6-7.3 mm deep, and a two-syllabled call, while its chick has pale down, whereas *P. georgicus* has a pale underwing without dark covert-shafts, a dark line down the back of the blue tarsus, and the bill 5-6 mm deep, and a squaky call of 5-10 syllables, while its chick has denser sooty-grey down.

## TROPIC-BIRDS *PHAETHONTIDAE*

The tropic-birds appear to be one of those families which anyone can identify though few are able to distinguish the species reliably, so the records are taken together regionally, indicating the supposed identification as given. In the North Atlantic Capt O. Connor reported a White-tailed Tropic-bird *Phaethon lepturus* (WT) at 37°25'N 65°15'W near the breeding-place on Bermuda on 23 Sep 74, KS a bird with a barred back identified as a Red-billed Tropic-bird *P. aethereus* (RB) at 38°42'N 64°09'W nearby on 23 Jul 76, and WW three RB at 23°20'N 16°10'W near the west African breeding places on 28 Mar 75, where Capt. F. Smith also reported an immature WT at 17°05'N 18°26'W on 8 Jul 75 and Capt. J. C. Woodbridge reported a bird at 21°N 50°W on 5 Nov 75. In the South Atlantic Capt. R. Lumley reported two RB at 13°10'S 0°22'W on 8 Sep 74, Capt. J. Bushey a bird at 17°55'S 24°E on 16 Apr 75, and M. Gyles another at 19°S 6°36'W on 12 May 75.

In the approaches to the Persian Gulf KRS saw six RB at 26°28'N 56°32'E around the Quoin Is on 11 Apr 73, and four at 23°51'N 58°04'E around the Damanaiyet Is next day. WW also saw a few off the Hanish Is especially Quoin Id in the southern Red Sea on 15 Oct 75 and many off Cape Guardafui and Ras Hafun ten days later. Elsewhere in the Indian Ocean PWGC reported two RB as far south at 7°33'N 75°32'E off the Maldives on 27 Jul 73, Capt. P. A. Arnson a WT on board at 2°15'N 75°10'E on 31 Jan 73, and MKB WTs at 4°30'N 72°45'E and 4°34'N 78°55'E nearby on 24 Feb and 12 Mar 74. A number of people reported the distinctive yellow race of WT, *P. l. fulvus*, further east, including Capt. P. Royan who saw one at 13°50'S 108°48'E on 11 Jul 73 and five more at 11°05'S 104°01'E next day, KS who saw two at 14°26'S 115°45'E on 6 Nov 73 and one at 15°45'S 110°48'E next day, and PWGC who saw two unprecedentedly far north at 16°17'N

93°36'E off the Nicobar Is on 7 Dec 73. Capt. D. T. MacLachlan had a RT on board off Mauritius on 1 Sep 73, and KS one at 9°30'S 135°14'E in the Arafura Sea on 29 Oct 73.

Further east DHM also reported two WT at 5°45'S 125°25'E in the Banda Sea on 15 Apr 73, and KS one WT at 17°42'N 130°58'E north of New Guinea on 24 Oct 73 and two WT at 5°50'N 130°17'E two days later. D. J. Houghton had a RT on board at 14°15'S 175°36'E on 12 May 75, ASY recorded one RT at 21°07'N 151°06'E on 20 Jun 77 and three RT at 20°50'N 144°55'E next day, JWWa saw one RT at 24°30'N 174°30'E on 25 Jul 74, and Capt. R. S. Sandry saw one RT at 40°01'S 141°28'W on 3 Feb 76 (noting that the sea temperature was 18.9°C). A. Frost reported "a white bird with a red bill" at 17°16'S 102°47'W on 26 Feb 76. RPC reported two RB at 19°32'S 76°36'W on 24 Mar 76 and four RB at 15°30'S 77°03'W next day, and JWWa one RB at 9°30'N 95°W on 28 Nov 76.

## GANNETS AND BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

There are many records of Northern Gannets *Sula bassana*, from birds seen by I. G. Hill at 69°06'N 16°40'E off Norway on 27 Feb 74 to numbers, mainly immature, seen by WW east of Algiers on 15 Oct 75 and over 200 seen by JWWa at 25°N 15°30'W off west Africa on 10 Jan 75, 100 which he saw at 23°20'N 16°10'W nearby on 28 Mar, and some 400 sulids, just under half in white plumage, seen by WFC at 21°N 17°26'W in this area on 2 Apr 73. There are also many reports of Cape Gannets *S. capensis* off South Africa, where for example PWGC saw 150 following trawlers at 34°49'S 17°40'E on 25 Apr 73, 1030 at 34°07'S 26°08'E on 27 Dec 74, and several hundred at 26°42'S 11°12'E on 2 Jan 75.

There are similarly a number of scattered records of Masked (or Blue-faced) Boobies *S. dactylatra*. In the tropical Atlantic TL recorded three at 6°28'S 32°11'W on 15 Mar 75, PKK one at 3°30'N 29°45'W on 20 Dec 69 and four at 6°S 33°45'W on 19 Apr 72, and WFC 14 off St. Helena on 21 Nov 74. In the Indian Ocean WW reported a few off the Hanish Is in the approaches to the Red Sea on 15 Dec 75, small groups between Astove and Cosmoledo atolls on 9 Jan 77 and two at 6°50'N 108°E on 9 Jul 77, PWGC one at 7°33'N 75°32'E on 27 Jul 73, and MKB saw six at 9°03'S 119°45'E on 29 Mar 74, and three at 8°30'S 128°E in the Arafura Sea two days later. In the Pacific KS saw three at 17°16'N 103°55'W on 1 Apr 74 and one at 13°01'N 139°45'E on 28 May, ASY saw hundreds at the Farallon Pajars at about 20°50'N 144°55'E on 21 Jun 77, and JWWa saw thirty at 13°N 121°W on 17 Jul 74, one at 21°16'N 160°42'W five days later, three at 8°30'S 92°W on 20 Sep 75, one at 11°45'S 108°W three days later, and one at 13°45'N 118°W two days after that, with two at 9°30'N 95°W on 25 Nov 76. KS saw three at 17°16'N 103°55'W on 1 Apr 74, and WW two at 6°50'N 108°E on 9 Jul 77.



Many Brown Boobies *S. leucogaster* were also reported off the Hanish Is in the southern Red Sea by WW on 23 Oct and 15 Dec 75. Further south in the Indian Ocean GHP saw one at 14°10'N 42°44'E on 6 Sep 77, MKB saw one at 0°03'S 72°55'E on 27 Feb, eight at 9°03'S 119°45'E on 28 Mar and seven at 9°04'S 122°17'E on the following day in 1974. In the East Indies JWWa saw one at 1°10'S 129°34'E on 13 Aug and another at 9°57'S 126°42'E on 27 Aug 74. In the Pacific ASY saw hundreds at 20°50'N 144°55'E off Farallon Pajars on 21 June 77, KS one at 7°29'N 141°31'E on 29 May 74, MKB seven at 23°S 168°23'E on 28 Jul 74, KS nine at 17°16'N 103°55'W on 1 Apr 73, JWWa birds at 11°45'N 108°W on 23 Sep 75 and 8°N 86°34'W on 27 Nov 76, and DHM 60 at 7°N 81°55'W on 4 Feb, 20 at 9°15'N 86°08'W next day, six at 11°N 90°W the day after and four at 13°N 95°W on 8 Feb in 1973.

There are a dozen reports of up to 44 Red-footed Boobies *S. sula* accompanying ships catching flying-fish, and sometimes perching aboard, for periods of up to a week. Eight reports come from the eastern tropical Pacific, where Capt. J. S. Laidlaw had them with him for 2,900 miles until he reached Hawaii in Feb-Mar 74, and Capt. J. G. Reeve had one from Cocos Id to within 250 miles of the Marquesas. They were also encountered two times each in the west Pacific and Indian Ocean. Notable records from the east Pacific include two seen at 12°20'N 93°07'W on 30 Mar 73 and one at 17°16'N 103°55'W next day by KS, one seen by Capt. D. W. Groves to catch four flying-fish at 1°40'N 92°W on 27 Jul 73, one seen from M.V. *Westcape* to catch over a dozen flying-fish in the air of Culpepper Id in the Galapagos on 27 Jul 73, and twelve reported by Capt. M. V. Cornish catching flying-fish on the windward side of the vessel early in the day between 9°30'N 94°W and 22°N 140°W on 20-28 Feb 75. In the west Pacific MKB saw eight at 24°05'S 173°48'E on 30 Sep 73 and seven at 23°S 168°23'E on 28 Jul 74, KS one at 1°53'N 144°E on 30 May 74, WW increasing numbers from 15°38'N 113°03'E to 10°27'N 110°17'E on 27-28 May and a few at 18°29'N 113°36'E on 13 Jul 77, and ASY again saw hundreds off the Farallon Pajars at 20°50'N 144°55'E on 21 Jun 77. In the Indian Ocean MKB saw one at 9°04'S 122°17'E on 30 Mar 74, Capt. R. E. Cowie had one aboard at 6°04'S 77°50'E on 24 Apr 74, and PWGC saw 96 at 9°30'S 45°45'E on 10 Jul 75. In the tropical Atlantic RWJ saw groups heading for Fernando de Noronha at dusk on 15 Jul 73, and PKK saw over 80 at 4°S 33°W nearby on 22 Dec 69 and one at 6°S 33°45'W on 19 Apr 72.

#### FRIGATE-BIRDS *FREGATIDAE*

Bryan Nelson provides the first useful drawings of the differences between the plumages of members of this difficult group in the *Living Bird* 14:113-155. Among numerous records WTJ saw two Ascension Frigate-birds *Fregata aquila* at 10°21'S 1°44'W in the tropical Atlantic on 10 Mar 73, and PWGC saw one with Sooty

Terns over a fish-shoal at 6°39'S 4°35'W on 9 Mar and another at 5°43'S 7°22'W on 22 Jun 75. JWWa saw nine Great Frigate-birds *F. minor* at 21°16'N 160°42'W in the Pacific on 22 Jul, another at 24°15'N 174°30'W three days later, and six at 1°10'S 129°34'E on 13 Aug 74, and DHM saw one at 5°45'S 125°35'E on 15 Apr 73. Around New Guinea DS saw two Lesser Frigate-birds *F. ariel* at 10°12'S 151°44'E on 29 Oct 72 and MKB birds at 8°41'S 130°35'E on 20 Oct 73 and further west one at 9°09'S 116°54'E three days later, 24 at 3°17'S 100°26'E on 6 Feb, five at 4°10'N 74°57'E on 12 Mar and five at 8°30'S 128°E on 31 Mar 74. PWGC saw two in the western Indian Ocean at 9°30'S 45°45'E on 10 Jul 75.

#### CORMORANTS AND SHAGS *PHALACROCORACIDAE*

Comprehension of this group, few of which are seen far out to sea, with no important records on this occasion, is complicated by persistent confusion over nomenclature. The vernacular names cormorant and shag have been used almost interchangeably in some parts of the world, shag in particular being reserved for the more marine, small agile species in the north and larger clumsy ones in the south. Particular confusion has reigned over the southern "king shags" with white breasts, gradually being resolved in favour of lumping a number of New Zealand forms in one species, the King (or Rough-faced) Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carunculatus*, and the Blue-eyed, Kergulen and American King Shags *P. atriceps*, *P. verrucosus* and *P. albiventer* in a second polymorphic species to be known as the Imperial Cormorant under the first name (*P.* Devillers and J. A. Terschuren, *Gerfaut* 68:53-86), although quite where outlying forms such as the Campbell Id Cormorant *P. campbelli* and Guanay *P. bougainvillei* fit in remains debatable. It should also be noted that Tuck's "White-necked Cormorant" *P. lucidus* is now usually treated as an African race of the Great (or Common) Cormorant *P. carbo*, but that a second small cormorant, the Crowned Cormorant *P. coronatus*, closely related to the inland Reed (or Long-tailed) Cormorant *P. africanus*, has been distinguished breeding along the coast of South Africa.

#### PHALAROPES *PHALAROPOPIDAE*

There are a number of reports of phalaropes identified with varying degrees of reliability from various parts of the world, so that they will be dealt with collectively with the suggested identity indicated where available. In the Atlantic PH reported a Grey (or Red) Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* (GP) at 66°30'N 14°15'W off eastern Iceland on 16 May 76, DHM four GP at 47°34'N 16°45'W on 24 Sep 76, WFC 1200 GP at 29°22'N 13°39'W off West Africa on 30 Nov 74, PWGC several thousand and possible Red-necked Phalaropes *P. lobatus* (RNP, never definitely proved to occur here) at 17°55'N 18°01'W on 26 Feb 74, KS one GP at 18°15'S 11°30'E off south-west Africa on 1 Dec 73, WW groups of GP at 25°20'S 11°03'E on 14 Feb and 32°09'S 16°21'E on 10 Mar 76, and PWGC three GP at 31°S 16°E on 10 Jan 76.

In the southern Persian Gulf PWGC reported 20 RNP at 26°27'N 56°32'E on 25 Nov 73, and 73 RNP at 25°12'N 57°37'E on 22 May 74, and DMS 40 RNP at 25°17'N 52°51'E on 4 Mar 77. Further east JJ describes eight phalaropes seen at 33°46'S 125°48'E three miles west of Evans Id in the Great Australian Bight on 4 Oct 71, MKB saw 72 RNP at 9°04'S 122°17'E off Sumba on 30 Mar 74 and numbers off Sumbawa on 22 Oct 73, and JWWa saw one RNP at 9°57'S 126°42'E off Timor on 27 Aug 74. PWGC saw 15 phalaropes in the South China Sea at 11°46'N 112°30'E on 14 Apr 74. In the North Pacific KS saw a flock at 19°05'N 105°14'W off western Mexico on 17 Mar 77, and DHM eight at 13°N 95°W on 8 Feb 73, 130 GP at 34°N 172°E on 26 Apr, 4,900 GP going east at 35°30'N 178°E next day, 20 GP at 37°N 173°W after crossing the date line, 150 GP at 38°30'N 167°W on 28 Apr, and seven at 41°29'N 161°04'W on 17 Jun.

### SKUAS *STERCORARIIDAE*

Considerable new information has recently come to light about the larger skuas of the genus *Catharacta*, causing a revision of some previous ideas. In the first place the South American forms have been investigated by Pierre Devillers (*Gerfaut* 68:374-417), who finds that they have an overlapping breeding distribution which makes it necessary to recognise three species, including the southern Brown Skua *C. antarctica* which appears to be a race of the northern temperate pelagic Great Skua *C. skua*; the Chilean Skua *C. chilensis* which is smaller with a darker cap and more rufous underparts, especially under the wing, and appears to have a limited distribution around southern South America, overlapping with the preceding form in Argentina; and the South Polar Skua *C. maccormicki*, which is polymorphic with either a dark brown or pale buff head and body, breeds around the Antarctic continent, and in at least some cases migrates north in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to winter in the Arctic.

In view of the limited information available on how to separate these forms they will be taken together. It may be noted that the North Atlantic Great Skua has recently been expanding greatly both within the British Isles and further north into the Barents Sea, where it is now breeding in North Norway, Bear Island and Spitsbergen (W. Vader, *Cinclus* 3:49-55). WFC reports that the first bird appeared at 65°15'N 12°35'W off Iceland on 22 Mar 76, with a maximum of 48 at 64°06'N 13°46'W on 9 May. Smaller numbers were recorded south to the tropics, where JWWa saw one at 1°41'S 30°07'W on 2 Apr 73, two at 13°49'N 40°56'W on 15 Dec 73, and two at 25°N 15°30'W on 10 Jan 75, and PKK one at 9°57'N 27°51'W on 18 Dec 69. In the southern hemisphere small numbers were seen around southern South America and South Africa, and JJ remarks how much commoner they are



around southern Australia, where up to eight attended each ship, than in New Zealand, where they are rare north of Stewart Island. Birds which presumably came from the south were recorded in the Indian Ocean by PC at 8°32'S 67°53'E on 9 Jul 75, PWGC at 9°30'S 45°45'E next day, WW at 10°19'S 47°40'E off Cosmoledo Atoll on 9 Jan 77, PWGC at 17°13'N 66°41'E on 13 May 74 and 28°21'N 50°55'E on 2 Aug 73, and WTJ at 23°49'N 58°42'E on 15 Jun 73. In the eastern tropical Pacific DHM saw one at 11°N 90°W on 6 Feb 73, and JWWa one at 9°30'N 95°W on 28 Nov 76.

The smaller skuas or jaegers of the genus *Stercorarius* present further difficulties of identification at sea, and will also be dealt with collectively. WFC reports occasional Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas *S. pomarinus* and *S. longicaudus* (PS, LTS) among the Arctic Skuas *S. parasiticus* (AS) seen at sea off east Iceland in May 76, and there are a number of records of all three on migration down the western coasts of Europe and Africa. In the tropical Atlantic PKK saw an AS at 4°S 33°W on 22 Dec 69, at 6°S 33°45'W on 19 Apr 72, and four PS at 15°30'S 26°45'W on 24 Apr 72, JWWa saw an AS at 16°S 3°E on 17 Sep 74, KS saw two AS at 18°15'S 11°30'E on 1 Dec 73, and WFC saw 37 PS and two LTS off St. Helena on 21 Nov 74. Further east PWGC saw a PS at 29°46'N 48°48'E off Khor al Amaya in the Persian Gulf on 2 Dec 74, five PS at 5°46'N 81°45'E off Sri Lanka on 6 Apr 74, and a PS at 11°46'N 112°30'E in the South China Sea eight days later. WW also saw three PS nearby at 12°55'N 111°39'E on 14 May 77, and a few further north at 28°05'N 122°57'E and 32°77'N 127°17'E on 18-19 May 77. JWWa saw one PS at 31°N 133°25'E on 21 Apr 76, and DHM 19 PS at 34°N 172°E on 26 Apr 73 and 35 PS and 25 AS at 35°30'N 178°E next day.

## GULLS AND TERNS *LARIDAE*

While we have numerous records of gulls and terns from inshore waters, only those from further out to sea add much to knowledge. The most important series of gull records relate to Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. In the north, WFC saw three at 64°12'N 14°02'W off eastern Iceland on 23 May 76. In the Bay of Biscay RMC saw three at 46°45'N 6°40'W on 15 Sep 74, and RWJ two at 42°45'N 9°38'W on 23 Aug and four at 41°50'N 6°40'W on 8 Oct 75. Off west Africa WW saw groups flying north at 16°20'N 17°36'W on 29 Mar 76, WFC at least 74 at 23°08'N 17°W on 28 Aug 74 and 18 at 13°29'N 17°44'W two days later, and PC one at 23°53'N 16°35'W on 12 Nov 74. Further south WFC saw one at 24°17'S 4°37'E on 9 Sep 74 and WW small groups between the Capes of Good Hope and Agulhas on 16 Feb and again at 32°09'S 16°21'E on 19 Mar 73. In the western tropical Atlantic KS saw 20 at 26°09'N 78°55'W on 13 Apr 73 and JWWa one in the Pacific at 8°N 86°34'W on 27 Nov 76.

There are also a number of records of Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* in the North Atlantic; the most notable is probably a westward movement of thousands of birds seen by M. Grover at 42°N 50°30'W on 19 Nov 74. In the north Pacific DWM noticed birds as far south as 31°N 128°E on 16 Jan 74, and 35°30'N 178°E in late Apr 73, while KS saw an adult at 19°05'N 105°14'W on 17 Mar 77. DLK also had a Little Gull *Larus minutus* on board at 60°N 9°W NW off the Hebrides on 13 Sep 72.

There are a number of pelagic records of Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata*. In the tropical Atlantic RRW saw four at 20°30'N 18°W off Cape Blanco on 1 Apr 75, PWGC 100 over a fish shoal at 6°39'S 4°35'W on 9 Jan 75, and PKK 13 at 4°S 33°W on 22 Dec 69, 25 at 8°S 34°W next day, 375 around 12°S 35°30'W the following day, 124 at 6°S 33°45'W on 19 Apr 72 and six at 1°30'S 32°W next day. In the Indian Ocean PWGC saw 216 at 11°29'N 73°05'E off the Laccadives on 4 Apr 74, one at 7°33'N 75°32'E off the Maldives on 27 Jul 73, and 115 at 9°30'S 45°45'E off east Africa on 10 Jul 75. Further east MKB saw five at 8°04'S 130°35'E on 20 Oct 73, three at 8°28'S 124°38'E next day, nine at 9°04'S 122°17'E on 30 Mar 74, and 30 at 8°30'S 128°E next day. WW saw birds off Kondo Id in the Malacca Strait on 19 Jul 77 and several groups at 12°59'N 111°E in the South China Sea on 10 Jul 77, many at 18°29'N 113°26'E on 13 Jul, and numbers at 12°22'N 111°23'E next day, and PWGC also saw 40 at 11°46'N 112°30'E on 14 Apr 74. In the Pacific KS saw 33 at 5°50'N 130°17'E on 26 Oct 73, five at 18°43'N 137°50'E on 27 May 74, and an immature at 7°29'N 141°31'E two days later, ASY saw hundreds off the Farallon Pajars at 20°50'N 144°55'E on 21 Jun 77, JW Wa saw 21 at 21°16'N 160°42'W on 22 Jul 74 and nine at 24°30'N 174°30'W three days later, and Capt. R. Bilton had two on board at 5°S 152°W on 18 Oct 73.

There are comparatively few records of other terns. WW saw a few Black-naped and Bridled Terns *S. sumatrana* and *S. anaethetus* near the Anamba Is in the South China Sea on 12 May 77, and more Bridled Terns in the northern Malacca Strait on 1 Jun 77. WFC also saw 45 Bridled Terns at 27°36'S 33°32'E off South Africa on 16 May 73, and GHP three with a Roseate Tern *S. dougallii* at 4°30'N 6°W off west Africa on 15 Nov 73. DS saw another Roseate Tern at 10°12'S 151°44'E off eastern New Guinea on 29 Oct 77, JW Wa 50 possible Crested Terns *S. bergii* at 5°30'N 97°55'E off west Sumatra on 1 Mar 76, RWJ 20 Caspian Terns *S. caspia* in Haifa harbour, Israel, on 24 Jul 75, and PWGC 100 Sandwich Terns *S. sandwicensis* at 29°46'N 48°48'E off Khor el Amaya, Persian Gulf, on 2 Dec 74. WW noted a few Common Noddies *Anous stolidus* west of Kondo Id in the Malacca Strait on 19 Jul 77, ASY saw hundreds off the Farallon Pajars at 20°50'N 144°55'E on 21 Jan 77, and Capt. C. Elliott had one on board at 4°42'S 28°36'W in the tropical Atlantic on 14 Oct 75.

## AUKS ALCIDAE

While the auks are often numerous offshore, there are also surprisingly few records far out to sea. They include 20 Little Auks *Alle alle* and eight Brünnich's Guillemots *Uria lomvia* seen by MKB at 64°30'N 10°05'W off east Iceland on 14 Apr 73, with four more of the latter at 66°30'N 14°W next day, a Crested Auklet *Aethia cristatella* and three Tufted Puffins *Lunda cirrhata* seen by KS at 54°27'N 166°50'W near Unimak Pass in the Aleutians on 18 Sep 73, seven more Tufted Puffins seen by DHM at 40°N 160°W on 29 Apr 73, 14 at 42°N 154°W next day, and 38 with five Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* which he saw at 42°N 172°E on 26 May 73.

## NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED 1984

By Stephen E. Chapman

That this year's report is shorter than those of prior years reflects the small volume of data received in the last calendar year, and the apparently lesser number of active seagoing members. Perhaps our small growth in membership has not been matched by seagoing members, or more likely this reflects the continuing decline in size of the Royal Navy and merchant fleet, particularly the latter which totalled 1140 ships at end 1980 and 690 ships at end 1984 and is forecast to shrink further. Notwithstanding the decline in our British fleets we are again grateful to twelve members and one non-member who sent in reports. Approximately 50% of these came from the Atlantic, 21% from the Pacific, 21% from the Indian Ocean, with the balance of 8% from elsewhere.

Report forms considered in this summary were received from the following observers whose observations are individually identified by their initials:

- Mr R. C. L. Aran — O.W.S. *Starella*. Multiple voyages between Greenock or Fleetwood and Ocean Station LIMA (57°N 20°W). 1982-84 (8 page report).
- Chief Petty Officer C. A. R. Bailey, R.N. — H.M.S. *Sirius*. Plymouth, Bermuda, Savannah, Norfolk, Va., Azores, Stornoway, Faeroes, Iceland, Amsterdam. January-March 1984 (10 page census report); Plymouth, Gibraltar, Italy, Brest, Italy. April-May 1984 (4 page report).
- Captain N. G. Cheshire — M.V. *Wiltshire*. Yeosu, South Korea. March-April 1983 (1 page report); New York-Flotta. August 1983 (4 page detailed census report and notes).
- Captain P. W. G. Chilman — M.V. *Tectus*. Hong Kong, Richards Bay, Aabenraa, Rotterdam, Rio de Janeiro. November 1982-February 1983 (9 page census report).
- L.R.O. (G) N. W. Cottle, R.N. — H.M.S. *Beaver*. Plymouth, Lisbon, Gibraltar and return. September-December 1984 (2 page report and 10 census sheets).



- Chief Officer C. J. Doodson (non-member) — M.V. *E. W. Beatty*. Kaohsiung, Newcastle, N.S.W., Rotterdam. May-Aug 1984 (1 page report).
- Chief Officer P. C. Dyer — M.V. *Venture Service*. Viking Oilfield, North Sea. February-March 1984 (2 page report with sketches).
- Radio Officer M. G. Finn — M.V. *Craiglas*. Return voyage Tubaro-Gijon. January-February 1984 (2 page report); two return voyages C. Finisterre-Monrovia. February-April 1984 (4 page report). M.V. *Hydrolock*. U.K., Norfolk, Va., Panama, Long Beach, Japan, Newcastle, N.S.W., June-August 1984 (6 page report).
- Third Officer A. R. Louch — R.R.S. *Discovery*. Off west coast of Africa. November-December 1983 (7 page census report and 2 bird in hand reports); Leixoes, northeast Atlantic and return to Leixoes, Falmouth. March-May 1984 (6 page census report); Tyne, Falmouth and Western Approaches. August-September 1984 (3 page census report and one bird in hand report).
- Captain K. Salwegter — M.V. *Amsteldiep*. Colombia River, Nagoya and return to Portland. October-November 1983 (9 page census report). M.V. *Amstelvoorn*. Durban, River Plate, Cape Town, Chah Bahar. January-March 1984 (2 page report and 15 census sheets).
- Captain D. M. Simpson — M.V. *Pacific Meranti*. Ras Tanura/Zuluf Oilfield. January 1984 (1 page census report); Zuluf Oilfield, Ras Tanura to Dubai. February-April 1984 (1 page census report); return voyage Arabian Gulf to Singapore. March-April (1 page census report). M.V. *Pacific Hawk*. Arabian Gulf. June-July 1984 (1 page census report). M.V. *Bigorange XII*. Sharjah, S. Yemen. November 1984 (1 page census report).
- Radio Officer W. Weitkowitz — M.V. *Neptune Marlin*. Rotterdam, Colombo, Bombay, Genoa, U.K. November 1983-February 1984 (9 page report). M.V. *Norasia Helga*. Piraeus, Suez, AG, Karachi, Hong Kong, Busan, Hong Kong, Suez, Marseilles, Rotterdam, Piraeus. June-September 1984 (16 page report).
- Captain R. R. Will — M.V. *Al Attared*. Cadiz, Valparaiso, Jeddah, Valparaiso, Cape Town, Jeddah. March-May 1984 (5 page report).

## NOTES ON SPECIES

### ALBATROSS *DIOMEDEIDAE*

#### Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*

In the South Atlantic on passage from Richards Bay to North Europe PWGC last sighted one immature at 27°40'S 11°55'E on 17 Dec 82. Sailing along the 34°S parallel from the Cape to the River Plate in Jan 84 KS reported sighting small numbers daily from 15°E to 45°W and on a return voyage, Montevideo to Cape Town in February, saw them from 52°W to 12°E.

#### Black-footed Albatross *Diomedea nigripes*

Small numbers seen during Jul 84 Pacific crossing from Long Beach to Japan from 31°N 117°W to 21½°N 179°E (MGF).

#### Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*

In the South Atlantic KS reported the following: one at 34°S 9°E on 8 Jan 84; one at 38°S 23°W on 19 Feb; 3 at 37°S 16°W on 20 Feb and a single at 36°S 4°W next day.

#### Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*

In the South Atlantic, one at 43°S 36°W on 29 Mar 84, two at 3 miles south Gough Island on 1 Apr and a single in the same location on 27 May (RRW).

## FULMARS, PRIONS, PETRELS, SHEARWATERS *PROCELLARIIDAE*

### Cape Petrel *Daption capense*

On passage from Japan to Newcastle (N.S.W.) MGF reported three at 28°30'S 153°54'E on 16 Aug 84 commenting on their unmistakable piebald appearance.

### Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*

Crossing the South Atlantic KS saw small numbers daily in mid-Jan 84 along the 34°S parallel from 2°W to 51°W and a month later larger numbers, up to 20 birds, in 38°S from 52°W to 34°W, and then no more to Cape Town. Somewhat later in the year RRW also crossing the South Atlantic but in latitudes 46°S to 41°S reported maximum sightings 3 miles south of Gough Island of 40 birds on 1 Apr and again 20 on 27 May.

### Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*

In Aug 84 WW reported this petrel as follows: several at 26°N 123°E, one at 32°N 127°E, c.40 in the east China Sea at 26°N 122°E and several south and southwest of Shantou.

### Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*

Ten in St. of Hormuz on 7 Apr 84; one at 25°45'N 53°E on 2 Aug; 60 near St. of Hormuz on 20 Nov 84 and 6 off S. Yemen on 27 Nov 84 (all DMS).

### Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*

One at 11°N 59°E on 26 Aug 84 on which WW comments "fast and swooping flight, sometimes arching over the horizon distinguishes this species from the similar *Puffinus pacificus* which flies more slowly and lower even under strong wind conditions of the SW monsoon". The same observer also reported small groups and single birds in the area north of Socotra next day. DMS reported 3 petrels "smaller and blacker than the Wedge-tailed and similar to Bulwer's" at 16°N 68°E on 10 Mar 84 which may have been this species. Twenty other petrels off the coast of Oman on 21 Nov 84 described as "all dark slender shearwaters, pointed tail and too small for Wedge-tailed" were probably of this species (DMS).

### Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*

Reported only by KS as follows: a group of 100 at 37½°N 143½°E on 2 Nov 83 and later the same day nearer Honshu at 36°N 141½°E they were "everywhere in scattered groups, too much to count". Next day scattered groups were seen at 35°N 138°E. On passage from Nagoya to Portland odd birds were seen at 35°N 140°E on 9 Nov and at 38°N 145°E next day but not reported further east.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Off South Africa PWGC made counts (duration of watch in minutes) as follows: one at 30°S 31°E (80 minutes) on 13 Dec 82, approx. ten at 32½°S 29°E (60 minutes), ten at 34°S 27½°E (90 minutes) and 7 at 35°S 21°E (90 minutes) next day. KS noted a group of 20 at 35°S 24°E on 6 Jan 84 and one next day at 34½°S 15°E. During a *Discovery* survey small numbers were recorded off the west coast of Africa: widely distributed from 10°N to the Equator in November and December 1983 but absent in the vicinity of Dakar and the Cape Verde archipelago later in December and in early January (ARL). A single bird was reported from the Gulf of Suez at 29°02'N 32°50'E on 1 Sep 84 (WW); for other sightings from this area see *Sea Swallow* 31:12.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*

One at 11°42'N 55°12'E on 10 Mar 84 (KS) and another at 16°12'N 57°18'E next day.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*

Eight at 13°N 18½°W on 21 Nov 83, four at 9½°N 19½°W next day and 3 at 3½°N 19°W on 24 Nov 83 (ARL). Also from the R.R.S. *Discovery* ARL encountered small numbers in the north-east Atlantic typified by the following scattered observations. Eight at 48°N 7½°W on 19 Sep 84, one at 41½°N 13½°W on 21 Sep, 3 at 38°N 18½°W on 23 Sep and 2 at 46½°N 11½°W on 26 Sep.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

In the eastern Atlantic ARL noted single birds as follows: off the west coast of Africa at 12°36'N 18°37'W on 21 Nov 83, at 3°28'N 19°11'W on 24 Nov and at 0°10'N 18°55'W on 6 Dec. Further north the same observer reported a single at 10' off Gallan Head (Lewis) on 26 Aug 84, another off Haskeir Isle (Outer Hebrides) on 28 Aug, two at 47°46'N 7°27'W on 19 Sep and one at 42°16'N 18°56'W on 24 Sep. In the South Atlantic off Cape Town KS noted hundreds in moult and apparently too heavy with food to get airborne as the ship passed, at 33°54'S 18°15'E on 26 Feb 84.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

A total of 42 in two groups off the continental shelf edge at 50°28'N 12°40'W on 26 Sep 84 (NWC).

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*

In the Indian Ocean WW noted multiple sightings all in 1984, as follows. Two at 12°N 51°E on 11 Jan, one at 11°N 56°E on 12 Jan, several at 10°N 61°E on 13 Jan, one at 15°N 72°E on 20 Jan, one at 15°N 57°E on 5 Feb, several at 12°N 44°E on 2 Jul, many at 14°N 49°E on 3 Jul, many at 16°N 55°E on 4 Jul, a few at 20°N 59°E on 5 Jul, several at 25°N 63°E on 16 Jul, a few at 22°N 68°E



on 19 Jul, few at 6°N 97°E on 25 Jul and several at 16°N 112°E on 29 Jul. Commenting on the identification of this shearwater WW noted "flight rising into the air during strong winds and confusion possible with *Bulweria fallax*. In calm weather flight usually low with some banking".

#### STORM-PETRELS *OCEANITIDAE*

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Summarising daily watches from an oilrig maintenance vessel in the AG through June and July 84, DMS commented that they were common in the eastern AG through July but none were seen in June. A single was sighted at 24°47'N 53°30'E but the majority were off Dubai. Similarly WW reported many at Bab el Mandeb, west of Aden on 2 Jul 84 and again at 20°N 59°E on 5 Jul. During late Aug WW also saw several small groups in the Gulf of Aden at 12½°N 48°E and near the Subair Islands at 14°23'N 42°18'E. In Nov DMS reported about 10 in small groups off the coast of Yemen.



White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*, South Atlantic, 1983  
Photo: Denstone College Expedition to Inaccessible Island

species. However, on 25 Jan a huge concentration estimated at 10,000 birds appeared in the harbour. They stayed in the port all afternoon. The majority were *P. nigrogularis*.

#### PHALAROPES PHALAROPODIDAE

##### Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Two at 40°N 14°W on 29 Mar 84 and two at night by ship's searchlight at 42°N 20°W on 2 May 84 (ARL).

##### Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

About 100 seen between Ras Tanura and Dubai on 3 Mar 84, but not seen in Jan or Feb in this area (DMS). Present off the coast of Oman in Mar/Apr and 2,000 in flocks between the oil exploration rig *Nymphaea* (14°49'N 50°15'E) and the coast particularly near the 50m depth contour on 24 Mar 84 (DMS). Several hundred in numerous flocks from 20°55'N 59°24'E to 22°06'N 59°52'E on 12 Mar 84 (KS). In the Gulf of Aden WW noted small groups at 12°48'N 45°26'E on 7 Feb 84 and a small group off C. Guardafui on 11 Jan 84. Several large groups were reported at 20°28'N 69°19'E and at Karachi outer harbour on 21 Jan 84 (WW). In Japanese waters WW reported small groups in Aug 84 as follows: coastal waters of Nagoya, off Shion Misaki, in Kii Suido, south of Shikoku, in Bungo Suido and a large concentration in SW Setonaikai.

#### SHEATHBILLS CHIONIDIDAE

##### Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis alba*

One at 52°S 66°W on 26 Mar 84 described as "snowy white, very fast wing beat and rather desperate flight as if having to work very hard to keep airborne" (RRW). The same observer also reported another in the western Magellan Strait on 20 May 84.

#### SKUAS STERCORARIIDAE

##### Great Skua *Catharacta skua*

Variously reported from the North Atlantic by NWC, PWGC, MGF and ARL. In particular PWGC noted 14 in a 100 minute watch at 36°51'N 12°51'W on 31 Dec 82 and NWC eight (in four hours) at 47°55'N 6°40'W on 3 Dec 84.

##### Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Multiple sightings again reported from the North Atlantic which include the following. At least 19 in a 2 hour watch at 13°N 19°W on 26 Dec 82 (PWGC). Up to six daily from 8°N 14°W on 28 Feb to 18°N 17½°W on 2 Mar 84 (MGF). One adult 30 SW Cape Blanc on 25 Mar 84 (MGF). Elsewhere KS reported 5 at Bandar Abbas Roads on 15 Apr 84; DMS reported 7 at 22°19'N 60°11'E (off the coast of Oman) on 7 Mar 84; and WW noted 10 in an afternoon at 13°N 45°E in the Gulf of Aden on 7 Feb 84.

## GULLS AND TERNS *LARIDAE*

### Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*

Eight at 44°N 151°E on 31 Oct 83 and two adults with Glaucous Gulls at 46°N 137°W on 22 Nov 83 (KS).

### Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

One immature present all day when ship anchored off Skaw (57°55'N 11°02'E) on 10 Jan 83 (PWGC).

### Little Gull *Larus minutus*

A few adults in the Messina Strait on 1 Jan 84, a small group south of Crete on 14 Feb and again several in the Messina Strait on 15 Feb (WW).

### Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Two (in a 10 minute watch) at 22°39'N 18°22'W on 28 Dec, 5 (75 minutes) at 23°55'N 17°49'W later the same day and 4 immatures (90 minutes) at 32°35'N 14°23'W on 30 Dec 82 (PWGC). Two adults at 22°N 21½°W on 11 Jan 84, 2 immatures at 150' off Lisbon on 8 Feb 84, 30-40, mostly immatures, 30' NW C. Blanc on 20 Feb, one 90' N of Dakar next day, 2 immatures 35' SW of Dakar when ship stopped on 1 Mar, and 5 immatures at 25°24'N 16°00'W on 24 Mar (MGF). Regular sightings of up to four birds in early January north-west of the Cape Verde archipelago in approx. 18°N 24°W (ARL). In the Mediterranean WW noted 2 west of Corsica on 29 Dec 83, several at Livorno anchorage next day, several at 38°55'N 00°40'E on 19 Feb 84 and a single bird in the Strait of Gibraltar on 20 Feb. 84. During a prolonged idling period at anchor off Puerto Cortes (15°S) RLW noted one amongst Laughing Gulls *L. atricilla* in mid-March 84, see photo. In the eastern Pacific NGC saw a single at Yeosu, S. Korea on 17 Mar 83.

### Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Following a severe electrical storm, 100 were observed (on board) overnight on 27 Apr 84, but flew off at dawn, 42°N 11°-12°W (ARL). Many reported in the southern Red Sea at 14°23'N 42°18'E on 29 Aug 84 (WW).

## AUKS *ALCIDAE*

Auk sp. two at 45°41'N 13°41'W on 10 Apr 84 and one at 45°46'N 13°37'W on 11 Apr 84 (ARL).

### Little Auk *Alle alle*

A group of 5 at 62°N 0°20'W on 10 Mar 84 and 10 near whales at 64°N 1°E on 12 Mar (CARB).





Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* at Puerto Cortes, Honduras

Photo: R. L. Westwater

#### Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

One at 55°N 16°W on 24 Jun 83 (RCLA). One at 55°N 21°W on 3 Mar 84 with other auks was well described by CARB. Inside the Arctic circle the same observer on H.M.S. *Sirius* noted one at 70°N 12°E on 18 Mar and three at 68½°N 8½°E on 21 Mar 84. In more temperate latitudes ARL saw 5 at 49½°N 16°W on 10 May 84 and one at 50½°N 13°W on 12 May and WW saw a few at 40½°N 9½°W on 10 Sep 84.

#### Tufted Puffin *Lunda cirrhata*

On a Pacific crossing in October 83 by way of the Unimak Passage, KS reported the following sightings: one at 53°N 146°W, 5 at 54°N 164°W, 1 at 54°N 171°W and 4 at 51°N 164°E.

#### REFERENCES

- Finlayson, J. C. and Cortes, J. E. 1984 The migration of Gannets *Sula bassana* past Gibraltar in spring. *Seabird* 7:19-22.

## LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA 1984

Analysis by Commander M. B. Casement, Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets were received during 1984. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials.

L.R.O.(G.) N. W. Cottle, R.N. — H.M.S. *Beaver* (4 sheets). 16 Oct-10 Nov 84, Eastlant.

Chief Petty Officer C. A. R. Bailey, R.N. — H.M.S. *Sirius* (4 sheets). Eastlant, Med., 27 Apr-16 May 84, St. John's, Canada, to Devonport, 20 Nov 84.

Chief Petty Officer C. J. Doodson, M.N., (non-member) — M.V. *E. W. Beatty*. Kaohsiung-Newcastle, N.S.W., 17-18 May 84.

Captain K. Salwegter, Neth. M.N. — M.V. *Amsteldiep*, M.V. *Amstelvoorn* (4 sheets). Pacific, 27 Oct-21 Nov 83. Geelong to Bandar Abbas, 25 Nov 84.

Second Officer M. G. Weir, M.N. — M.V. *Fort Kamloops*. Sumatra to Jeddah. 18 Aug 84.

Chief Officer P. C. Dyer, M.N. — M.V. *Venture Service* (2 sheets). Viking Field (North Sea), 6-22 Mar 84, 5 May-7 Jun 84.

Third Officer A. R. Louch, M.N. — R.R.S. *Discovery*. N.E. Atlantic, 6 Apr-14 May 84, 25 Aug-20 Sep 84.

Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N. — M.V. *Tectus* (3 sheets). Hong Kong to Richard's Bay, 22-26 Nov 82, also off Skaw 9-29 Jan 83.

Radio Officer W. Weitkowitz, German M.N. — M.V. *Norasia Helga* (5 sheets). Piraeus to Busan, 30 Jun-29 Jul, Busan to Rotterdam (via Med.), 11 Aug-9 Sep. Rotterdam to Piraeus, 24-26 Sep 84.

Captain J. W. Welch, M.N. — S.S. *Strathconon*. Busan to Los Angeles, 5 Dec 84.

Chief Engineer J. R. Bougley, M.N. — M.V. *Taiwo*. Capetown to River Plate, 15 May 84.

Captain D. M. Simpson, M.N. — M.V. *Pacific Meranti* (2 sheets). 3 Mar 84, and M.V. *Pacific Hawk*. 8 Jul-6 Sep. Persian Gulf.

Bird Examined in the Hand (BEH) forms were received from ARL (1), DMS (1), PCD (3) and PWGC (2). A letter enclosing excellent photographs of a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* was received from Commander C. F. Heron-Watson, R.N., H.M.S. *Hydra* (see section A).

Thanks to Captains J. F. T. Houghton and M. L. M. Coombs, of the Meteorological Office, Bracknell, the spate of excellent extracts from Meteorological Logs continues to flow and are handled, as last year, by Captain A. S. Young, M.N.

This analysis is presented in sections A to I to cover the same geographical sea areas as in previous years, but with the additional Section J covering the increased reporting from the South Atlantic. Extracts from Met. Logs are indicated by the notation (Met).

## SECTION A

### EAST ATLANTIC (EAST OF 30°W) INCLUDING BAY OF BISCAY AND IBERIAN

1983

On 5 Nov a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* landed on board M.V. *Beacon Grange* (Met) in position 34°45'N 16°11'N (110°NNE Madeira). It arrived from north and left during night on passing close to Madeira.

1984

On 9 Apr ARL recorded a Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* on board 45°45'N 13°30'W (240°NW C. Finisterre). It remained 18 hrs during easterly winds force 8 and mist patches.

On 14 Apr ARL reported Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and a Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (M) 245' West of C. Finisterre.

During the period 19-22 Apr ARL recorded the following in the general area 39°40'N 15°00'W (250'W Benguela Rocks, Portugal):

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. 19th (1), 20th (1), 22nd (2).

Blackcap. 19th (1M + 1F) arr. p.m.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*. 19th (2), 20th (2).

Swallow. 20th (4) at 1600, and a sudden "fall" of about 50 arrived during period 1750-1815 (wind was ENE force 5).

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*. 20th (3) at 1750.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*. 20th (1M + 1F).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*. 20th (1).

*Phylloscopus* warblers. 20th (2), thought to have been a Chiffchaff *P. collybita* and a Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix*.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*. One possible on 20th.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*. One arrived at dusk on 22nd.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. 22nd (1F) remained 4 hrs.

On 28 Apr ARL was 210' WSW C. Finisterre (42°N 18°W) and recorded:

House Martin (1), Turtle Dove (2), Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* and a possible Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*.

CARB recorded Swallows during easterly winds when travelling S 100°+ off coast of Portugal 27 Apr (3), 28 Apr (4), and a House Martin came on board during heavy rainstorms (wind 350°/11 kts) on 29 Apr when 105°S C. St. Vincent (48°50'N 28°33'W).

On May 10 ARL saw a Curlew *Numenius arquata* flying NE when 215'SW Mizen Hd. (49°23'N 16°07'W) and recorded a Turtle Dove on board 4 hrs.

On 12 May ARL recorded Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, Swallow and Turtle Dove on board following heavy rain and wind SE/4. A group of 8 Swallows were seen at first light on 13 May when 130°W Hebrides (51°34'N 13°00'W).

On 12 May a prob. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and 3 Dunlin *Calidris alpina* were noted on board R.R.S. *Bransfield* (Met) in position 44°40'N 13°23'W.

A Whimbrel was on board M.V. *Celtic Endeavour* (Met) on 13 May in position 47°33'N 7°08'W (100°SW Ushant) and remained until a.m. 14th when close to Land's End.

During the period 25 Aug-2 Sep ARL was operating in the general area 58°N 08°W (30' west of Hebrides) and reported the movement of passerines and waders including:

Redshank *Tringa totanus*. 25 Aug (2), 2 Sept (2).

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. 28 Aug (3).



Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*. 2 Sep. Two groups of 2 flying SW.  
 Curlew. 2 Sep (1) departed SW.  
 Wheatear. 26 Aug (1), 31 Aug (1), 2 Sep (1M) on board 5 hrs.  
 Meadow Pipit. 31 Aug (35 + 10). Arr. overnight in heavy rain, attracted by lights, exhausted state, three captured (one BEH), 2 Sep (25-30).  
 White/Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. 1 Sep (1), 2 Sep (3) - description suggests White Wagtail *M. a. alba*.  
 On 4 Oct a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* bearing a ring on its right leg was on board M.V. *Cirolana* (Met) in position 41°38'N 15°10'W (260'WSW C. Finisterre).  
 On 6 Oct a prob. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* was on board M.V. *Avelona Star* (Met) in position 31°12'N 14°42'W (160'SE Madeira).  
 On 11 Oct M.V. *Appleby* (Met) reported a kestrel sp., possibly Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (F), perching on mast and circling ship in position 10°18'N 24°20'W (280'S C. Verde).  
 On 13 Oct M.V. *Dart Britain* (Met) reported a prob. Merlin *Falco columbarius* eating a small bird on top of a container in mid-Atlantic, 50°30'N 29°25'W (800' + SE Greenland, 800'W Ireland).  
 NWC, crossing the Bay of Biscay 16-17 Oct, recorded Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (F or juv) and 4 unidentified thrushes *Turdus* sp. On the return trip 23-30 Oct he recorded Robin, Black Redstart (2), Blackcap (1F), Skylark, and prob. Meadow Pipits (12).  
 On 18 Oct a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* was photographed on board H.M.S. *Hydra* in position 57°11'N 07°43'W (8'W Barra Hd.).  
 On 29 Oct a prob. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* arrived in an exhausted state on board M.V. *Appleby* (Met) in position 6°15'N 28°16'W (580'SSW C. Verde, 330'NNE St. Paul's Rocks). The previous weather had been heavy rain, wind SE backing NE/force 4.  
 On 20 Nov CARB reported a prob. Cattle Egret which circled ship low over water for an hour in position 48°50'N 28°33'W (550'N Azores).

## SECTION B

### ENGLISH CHANNEL, NORTH SEA AND BALTIC

1983

On 9 Jan PWGC noted Common Scoter *Melanitha nigra* off the Skaw (57°35'N 11°02'E).  
 On 16 Sep two prob. Merlin *Falco columbarius* came aboard M.V. *Dallington* (Met) on passing Bornholm Island and remained, chasing and killing small insect-eating birds; the killing became "somewhat of a massacre".  
 On 17 Nov M.V. *Baltic Eagle* (Met) recorded a flock of over 100 Eider Duck *Somateria mollissima* close east of Kiel.

1984

On 25 Jan M.V. *Baltic Eagle* (Met) noted large numbers of Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* 5'S Karlskrona; about 2000 in small and large flocks were moving in general SSE direction.  
 On 6 Mar PCD saw a group of 34 Mute/Whooper Swans *Cygnus olor*/C. *cygnus* flying east at 200ft (position 53°N 02°00'W), and on 22 Mar recorded prob. Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* in position 52°N 02°20'E (25'SE Orfordness) harassing small birds including Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, and Blackbird *Turdus merula*.

PCD was operating in Viking Field general area 53°30'N 02°20'E (60'NE Norfolk) 5-9 May and recorded:

Song Thrush *Turdus philometos*. 5 May (1).

Whinchat *Saxicola torquata*. 5 May (1).

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*. 5 May (1) - circled ship and mobbed by gulls.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*. 5 May (1).

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*. 9 May (1).

On 7 Jun PCD was again in the same area and noted House Martin *Delichon urbica* (4) circling for 1 hour; one was later found dead. A Swift *Apus apus* made several attempts to land on board.

**Postscript.** Received too late to include here were 38 sheets of records covering the North Sea from Mark Tasker and the Seabirds at Sea Team during the period 16 Dec 83-9 May 85. These will be analysed and commented upon next year.

## SECTION C

### WEST ATLANTIC (West of 30°W)

1983

12-14 Nov, while drifting 50' off Bahamas M.V. *London Victory* (Met) recorded, with excellent descriptions and sketches:

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* (3).

Burrowing Owl *Athene curicularia* (1).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (2).

At dusk on 27 Dec for 30 mins a Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* made several approaches up-wind over the ship as if to land on board M.V. *Etrema* (Met) in position 27°N 70°W (300'ENE Bahamas).

1984

On 28-30 Sep, while off the coast Norfolk, Va., to Wilmington, N.C., two probable Merlins *Falco columbarius* were on board M.V. *Clytoneus* (Met).

On 15 Oct M.V. *Guestar* (Met) reported a falcon, probably a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, or possibly a Merlin, in position 30°20'N 47°10'W (630'E Bermuda, 1100'SSE Newfoundland). It remained overnight on foremast and was last seen making repeated and unsuccessful stoops at small seabird which escaped by jinking about very close to the sea surface. It was thought to have been blown offshore by hurricane "Josephine".

On 20 Oct M.V. *Harold La Borda* (Met) reported a prob. Merlin on board in position 29°12'N 44°W (900'SW Azores, 1200'SE Newfoundland). It remained all day and on 21st a beheaded petrel sp. was found on bridge deck.

On 15 Nov M.V. *Rubens* (Met) recorded a large hawk in approaches to Belle Isle (Canada) which remained for 3 hrs diving for fish and was mobbed by gulls. The description best fits Osprey, though it seems unusually late to find this species so far north.

## SECTION D

### GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

1983

On 20 May two Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* circled M.V. *City of York* (Met) in position 20°15'N 83°30'W (100'SW Cuba).

1984

On 25 Oct several bittern/heron sp., probably juv. night herons *Nycticorax* sp. landed on board M.V. *Act 5A* (Met) during night of continuous heavy rain and electric storms in position 18°30'N 83°W (200'SW Cuba). Only one remained a.m. 26th and ate small pieces of wetted bread.

On 26 Nov a Cattle Egret was on board M.V. *California Star* (Met) for 12 hrs (position 15°45'N 68°37'W - 200'SW Puerto Rico).

## SECTION E

### MEDITERRANEAN (and BLACK SEA)

1983

On 9 Jun a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* was on board briefly M.V. *Crown Prince* (Met) in the Ionian Sea, 160'SE C. Spartivento (35°51'N 18°20'E).

A Hoopoe *Upupa epops* landed on board M.V. *Cheshire* (Met) off Gibraltar on 12 Aug and remained throughout the passage east until it finally departed on arrival at Port Said.

1984

On 8 May CARB recorded a prob. Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* in position 36°27'N 1°02'E, and on 14 May a Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava* in Ionian Sea 180'E Sicily (36°37'N 18°32'E). A prob. Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* was recorded by CARB on 16 May in position 36°11'N 18°02'E.

On 27 Dec M.V. *Salmon Pool* (Met) recorded a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* sleeping on hatch-cover 1100-1500 LMT whilst at anchor off Ust-Dunaysk (U.S.S.R.) in Black Sea (45°25'N 30°01'E).

1985

On 15 Jan a Flamingo *Phoenicopterus rubetra* circled M.V. *Discovery Bay* for 30 mins, being mobbed by gulls in position 40°05'N 5°00'E (35'E Minorca). It was last seen heading north.

(Comment: Clearly this was one of many seeking escape from the very harsh cold weather in southern Europe at this time.)

## SECTION F

### RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1984

On 24 Apr M.V. *Moray Bank* (Met) recorded, in central Red Sea, a Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (3F and 1M, later increased to max 8) which made occasional dives at smaller birds including swallows, warblers and wagtails.

On 30 Jun WW recorded Barbary Falcon *F. peregrinoides* (3) on board for several hours in central Red Sea and on 3 Jul another in NE Gulf of Aden (14°02'N 49°24'E during strong SW monsoon.



On 18 Aug MGW reported a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* in position 12°34'N 46°01'E (5° S South Yemen). It arrived from N and remained at least 4 hrs.

On 29 Aug WW noted a Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* on board briefly in S Red Sea and on 1 Sep a small group of White Stork *Ciconia alba* heading S in Gulf of Suez.

13-14 Dec M.V. *Staffordshire* (Met) recorded a Bee-eater which arrived on board in Gulf of Aden and remained until next day in Red Sea.

## SECTION G

### INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1984

On 8 Sep two herons, prob. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, landed on board M.V. *Tor Bay* in position 19°42'N 64°46'E (130'SW Diu Head, India) during strong (Force 6) SW monsoon. They made several attempts to make headway towards land but returned after circling ship. Both disappeared after dark when wind moderated.

## SECTION H

### PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1984

DMS recorded the following species, mainly from Zaqum Oilfield (24°43'N 53°42'E) or Zuluf Oilfield (28°25'N 49°15'E).

3rd March. Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus* (M), 26°30'N 52°00'E (42'NE Qatar.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (M) at Zaqum on 8 Jul.

Desert Wheatear *O. deserti* (F) on 26 Aug.

Prob. Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellinus* (F) Zuluf on 5 Sep.

Squacco Heron *Ardea ralloides* — non-breeding bird — on 17 Jul in position 25°42'N 54°19'E (16'SE Sirpi Is.).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*. 29 Aug (1) Zuluf, 6 Sep (2 flying NE); prob. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*. Zuluf, 4 flying SE on 5 Sep.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. 7 Aug (1), 26°11'N 55°42'E.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*. 4 Sep (3 circled ship closely) Zuluf.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*. Ten counted period 22-28 Aug and at least six 5-6 Sep.

European Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. 25/26 Aug (1), Zuluf.

Roller *Coracias garrulus*. 18 Aug. One on Abu Nu-ayi Island 25°14'N 59°12'E.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*. 23 Aug. One spent all a.m. on various oilfield platforms and barges at Zuluf.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. Zuluf. 5-6 Sep (5) plus one prob. 24-25 Aug.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. One F or juv rested on barge 1 hr off Khafji (28°27'N 48°32'E) on 1 Sep.

Prob. Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla*. Two thought to be this species with conspicuous white edges to wing feathers on 31 Aug 28°13'N 49°10'E and another on 6 Sep in Zuluf Oilfield.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*. Zuluf. At least four 5-6 Sep.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*. 6 Sep (1 on board a.m.). Zuluf.

Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus*. 26 Aug (1 landed and caught, BEH). Zuluf.

On 6 Sep a number of warblers were about the ship (in Zuluf Oilfield) tentatively identified as Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (1), Chiffchaff *P. collybita* and Upcher's Warbler. *Hippolais languida*.

## SECTION I

### PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1982

PWGC, travelling from Hong Kong to Richard's Bay reported at least 6 Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* on 22 Nov in position 04°46'N 109°52'E (110'SE Vietnam) and 5 Barn Swallows *H. rustica* when 67'W of Borneo (00°13'S 108°03'E) on 24 Nov. On 25 Nov an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* passed by flying east when 6 miles off Billiton Is. (02°58'S 107°18'E); a probable Shikra *Accipiter badius* and a Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* were sighted on board. Later, when 145'SSW Billiton Is. a group of 12 Oriental Pratincoles *Glareola maldivarum* flew past heading south; 3 landed on board. One of these was still about ship next day.

On 6 Nov, when 270'WSW Sumatra (08°30'S 100°50'E) a Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus* was aboard.

1983

On 27 Oct KS recorded a Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* which tried to land on board in position 52°14'N 169°53'E (110'SW Atta Is., Aleutians). The wind was west force 7. On 30 Oct a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* passed by but wind (W/9) was too strong to land - position 46°58'N 154°07'E (50'SE Kuril Is.).

On 1 Nov was 70'SW Hokkaido, Japan (40°27'N 146°42'E) and recorded:

Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus* (adult M) which remained 1 hr and caught and ate a small bird.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* (2 adult F).

Black Brant *Branta nigricans*.

Scaup *Aythya marila*.

On 21 Nov KS recorded a crane, thought to be a Whooping Crane *Grus americana* in position 46°03'N 143°42'W (650'SW nearest land - Queen Charlotte Is., Canada). The wind was gale force 9 from SSW.

*Comment:* I have discussed this remarkable record with U.S. experts who are completely baffled but can offer no better explanation why this or any other species of crane should be so far off land; less than 100 Whooping Cranes remain in the world. A vagrant species from Asia also cannot be ruled out.

1984

On 23 Apr two night herons *Nycticorax* sp. arrived on board M.V. *Appleby* (Met) in position 28°N 133°E (200'SE Japan) and remained 2 days. A Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was also aboard on 24 Apr when 240'SE nearest land.

On 1 May a swallow, reported as a Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*, was aboard M.V. *Resolution Bay* (Met) in position 46°45'S 163°06'W, over 800'SW nearest land (Chatham Island).

On 17 May a "bittern", probably a Malayan Night Heron *Gorsachius melanophrys* was reported by M.V. *E. W. Beatty* (Met) when 15'S Taiwan (21°35'N 120°15'E) and on 18 May, when 75'E Philippines (20°25'N 122°05'E), a Red Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* and a prob. Pacific Swallow *H. tahitica*.

On 29 Jul WW recorded a Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* on board briefly in position 16°26'N 112°17'E (20'S of Paracel Is. in China Sea).

On 10 Aug a prob. Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris* was on board M.V. *Aurora* (Met) 200'E Philippines (12°00'N 127°55'E).

On 7 Sep M.V. *Asia Winds* (Met) reported a prob. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* 120°SE Japan (30°59'N 139°32'E).

On 5 Dec JWW recorded a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* on board during daylight hours when 600°WSW San Francisco (37°48'N 131°21'W).

## SECTION J

### SOUTH ATLANTIC

(In previous years, records in this area have been included in Section A; for additional records, see the paper by Bourne and Curtis on page 18 of this volume.)

1984

On 29 Apr M.V. *Mairangi Bay* (Met) recorded three egrets, almost certainly Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* which arrived after night of NW gales in position 390°ESE Rio Grande. They remained in an exhausted state for at least 24 hrs. Also present was an unidentified species of rail *Ralloides* sp., possibly a Sora *Porzana carolina*.

A Cattle Egret was also reported on board M.V. *British Esk* (Met) 10-12 May, first noted in position 43°18'S 44°18'W (750°SE Argentina).

On 10 May M.V. *Leicester Brook* (Met) noted a species of "lily trotter" or possibly a Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* in position 24°00'S 42°00'W (60°S C. Frio, Brazil).

Another wayward Cattle Egret was reported by JRB on 15 May which was on board for one hour in position 35°10'S 32°57'W (780°SE C. Frio, 1100°W Tristan da Cunha). The wind was NNW/20kts.

On 30 May an unidentified "Blackbird", possibly a grackle sp., landed briefly on M.V. *Lincoln Brook* (Met) and flew off in position 38°19'S 42°05'W (550°E Argentina).

## REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIPS

John Agnew has very regretfully had to give up the co-ordination of these reports, due to the pressure of other work, but Captain Peter Chilman has now assumed this task, and also the analyses of seabird observations. These records are especially valuable because over the years collectively they produce a unique insight into the distribution and movements of both seabirds and landbirds in the same area throughout all seasons of the year.

### LANDBIRD REPORTS 1982/83

By Commander M. B. Casement, R.N.

Records from R. C. L. Aran at or near Station Lima (57°N 20°W) - 210nm WSW Rockall, 450nm S. Iceland) cover the following periods:

1982 5-22 June, 20 Sep-17 Oct and 4 Dec.

1983 5-29 May, 30 Aug-15 Sep and 6-12 Nov.

Also included were four Bird Examined in the Hand (BEH) forms — Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, and House Martin *Delichon urbica*.



## 1982

House Martin. 5 June (1), 6 June (2), 7 June (1).  
 Swallow. 22 June. One stayed 2 days — very bedraggled, tame and coaxed on to back of hand.  
 Wheatear. 20 Sep (8) sheltered in balloon shed 2 hrs, wind 180°/13 kts.  
 21 Sep (1), 27 Sep (1), 11 Oct (5). One caged and fed sugar water but died 12th.  
 Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*. 6-7 Oct (1), 14 Oct (1) arr. 2000Z during continuous rain and wind 180°/12 kts. Stayed until 17th. 16 Oct (2M) found sleeping in balloon shed, caught and caged but objected to captivity and released. Last seen 0200Z on 18th. 4 Dec (1) resting on roof of balloon shed out of wind (270°/20 kts.).  
 Short-eared Owl. One arr. 6 Oct and remained 3 days but found dead on 9th. 11 Oct (1) followed wheatears on board but did not touch them.  
 Grey Plover *Charadrius squaterola*. Flew into superstructure a.m. 7 Oct. Picked up dazed and caged with food and water but died a.m. 9th.  
 Skylark *Alauda arvensis*. One prob. on 10 Oct sheltering from rain, very bedraggled.  
 Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. 14 Oct (1) arr. during heavy rain and remained until 17th.

## 1983

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*. 5 May (1) settled on water and swam alongside ship, 30 yards off, for about 1 hr.  
 Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*. 9 May (1M), 28 May (1).  
 Wheatear. 14 May (1M), 15 May (2M) - very black eyepatches. 16 May (2) and 19 May (1) exhausted and cold (wind 350°/14 kts.). All 3 died and sent to British Museum. 20 May (3) arr. during light winds, around most of day then departed. 6 Sep (1) observed from 3 ft. distance and identified as Greenland race. *O. o. leucorrhoa*. 15 Sep (1) remained until 21st.  
 Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*. 15 May (1) on well deck walking around "looking like a city gent", 22 May (1), possibly same bird.  
 Swallow. 27 May (1) arr. S dep. NE, 28 May (1), winds easterly 20 kts.  
 Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. 30 Aug. one prob. huddled on roof of balloon shed, 4 Sep (1), 10 Nov (1).  
 Little Owl *Athene noctua*. One prob. on 29 May disturbed in balloon shed at 0245Z.  
 Skylark. 30 Aug (1).  
 flava Wagtail *Motacilla flava*. 7 Sep (4). Close view of one suggested possibly Grey-headed *M. f. thunbergi*.  
 ARL also recorded a Blackcap (M) on 1 Oct (in position 63°40'N 00°38'W, 170nm N Shetlands) and a Ring Ousel *Turdus torquatus* (F). Whilst on station briefly at Station Mike (66°N 02°E - 330nm'NE Faeroes, 270nm'NW Norway) a Ring Ousel, possibly the same bird, and three Wheatears were seen together 4-5 Oct, also a small unidentifiable passerine.

**Comment.** As is to be expected, the majority of records coincided with prevailing easterly winds, and especially for long distance migrants to (and from) Iceland e.g. wheatears and plovers, with strong northerly (or southerly) components, i.e. during headwinds. There are however a number of anomalies, and records on unusual dates (e.g. Blackcap).

## SEABIRD REPORTS 1982/83

by Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N.

This summary of seabird sightings from Station Lima continues from those published in *Sea Swallow* 31: 33-36. There are however no records for the period January to March 1982. The

format and key used are the same as that used by Agnew, with the addition of a number in brackets for each month to indicate the number of days on which observations were made. Periods of observation are no longer continuous due to the weatherships *Admiral Beaufort* and *Admiral FitzRoy* having been replaced by the single ship *Starella*.

The daily counts in Table I (April 82 to February 83 on 177 days) include a total of 4,434 sightings of Fulmars (of which 6 were blue-phase birds), 57 Gannets (of which 28 were immatures), 139 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (53), 129 Great Black-backed Gulls (41), 16 Glaucous Gulls (1) and 3,633 Kittiwakes (936).

In Table II (March to December 83 on 173 days) daily counts total 5,155 Fulmars (including 10 blue-phase), 37 Gannets (including 18 immatures), 292 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (95), 221 Great Black-backed Gulls (86), 18 Glaucous Gulls (2), and 3,902 Kittiwakes (1,211). Eleven Guillemots were seen during this period including one of the bridled form.

Species not present in the earlier report but noted here are Little Shearwater (3) and Cory's Shearwater (1). There were no sightings of Wilson's Storm-petrel, Leach's Storm-petrel, Ivory Gull, Iceland Gull, Sabine's Gull or Razorbill and these have been omitted from the tables.

Only one oiled seabird, a Kittiwake, was reported during the period. An unusual record was a group of 6 Black-headed Gulls in full breeding plumage in Jan 83, and from the description there appears no doubt that the identification was correct.

The R.N.B.W.S. is greatly indebted to all those who have maintained the continuity of observations — R. C. L. Aran, G. Allen, D. E. C. Hampton and other unnamed members of the Weathership and Meteorological Staff.

#### OCEAN WEATHER SHIP OBSERVATIONS

##### SUMMARY OF SEABIRD SIGHTINGS, STATION LIMA (57°N, 20°W)

Table I — April 1982 to February 1983

Observation days	Apr (28)	May (4)	June (27)	July (10)	Aug (24)	Sept (9)	Oct (21)	Nov (16)	Dec (10)	Jan (22)	Feb (6)
Fulmar	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	x
Great Shearwater					—						
Cory's Shearwater					—						
Sooty Shearwater					—		—				
Manx Shearwater					—		—				
Little Shearwater					—						
British Storm-petrel	—		—		—	—	—	—			
Gannet	—		o	—	—						
Great Skua	o	—	—	—	o	—	—				
Pomarine Skua			—	—	—		—				
Arctic Skua			—	—	—						
Long-tailed Skua			—	—			—				
Herring Gull											
Lesser B.-b. Gull	o		o		—	—					
Great B.-b. Gull	—		—	—	—	—		—	—	—	—
Glaucous Gull						—		—		—	—
Kittiwake	o	—	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Black-headed Gull	—		—		—					—	
Arctic Tern			—								
Common Tern					—						
Little Auk							—				
Guillemot			—		—						
Puffin											

Table II — March 1983 to December 1983

Observation days	Mar (29)	Apr (5)	May (28)	June (6)	July (23)	Aug (13)	Sept (18)	Oct (16)	Nov (13)	Dec (22)
Fulmar	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Great Shearwater										
Cory's Shearwater										
Sooty Shearwater										
Manx Shearwater										
Little Shearwater										
British Storm-petrel										
Gannet	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Great Skua	—	o	o		—		o	—	—	
Pomarine Skua										
Arctic Skua										
Long-tailed Skua										
Herring Gull										
Lesser B.-b. Gull			o		—		—			
Great B.-b. Gull			o		—		—	—	—	o
Glaucous Gull	—	—	—		—	—	—	—	—	—
Kittiwake	o	x	x	—	o	o	o	o	o	—
Black-headed Gull										
Arctic Tern					—	—	—			
Common Tern										
Little Auk										
Guillemot									—	—
Puffin										

Key — Occasional sightings o Average 1-49 per day x Average 50 or more per day

## SEABIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM METEOROLOGICAL REPORTS

By Captain A. S. Young

In 1984 I received and dealt with 54 seabird reports from 46 Voluntary Observing Fleet ships, ranging from single observations to complete passage reports, several including detailed diagrammatic sketches, and also one or two photographs. The reports cover 99 species of seabirds of which the largest group are the petrels *Procellariidae* and storm-petrels *Oceanitidae*, 16 and 9 species respectively, gulls *Laridae* 16 species, and albatrosses *Diomedidae* 12 species. A considerable number of reports are from the southern oceans and vessels voyaging to and from the Falklands area.

Of special note are the three comprehensive reports from M.V. *Act 7* under the command of Captain D. M. McPhail (R.N.B.W.S. member) and Captain D. Newland, detailing voyages to and from the southern oceans. The *Leicester Brook*, Captain I. Anderson, reports were compiled with excellent sketches by the Chief Officer, P. G. Powell (now a member), on a voyage to and from the Falklands. Mr Powell also reported from the *Lincoln Brook* (see Fig. 1), Captain R. G. Davis, on a similar voyage, and from the same vessel Mr G. Worstenholme, Chief Officer, also sent a very comprehensive report with excellent sketches, voyaging to the Falklands via Ascension Island. From Radio Officer B. A. Mullen we continue to get a steady flow of observations, from M.V. *Falmouth Bay*, Captain T. J. R. Manson, a north Pacific Ocean voyage, also M.V. *Encounter Bay*, Captain M. J. Heron, voyaging



to Australia, when Royal Albatrosses *Diomedea epomophora* and a chick were observed at the well-known Taiaroa Head colony.

While the above reports warrant special mention I would like to thank all the gentlemen who have bothered to spend a little time and effort in reporting their observations. One observer qualified his rather crude sketch with the comment "artist I am not!", point taken. However, even a rather crude sketch if carefully annotated with accurate diagnostics is of considerable value, possibly more so than an artistic effort without.

Apart from the usual gulls and boobies *Sulidae* using a ship as a convenient resting place or fishing platform, a number of other seabirds were found on board, some in a distressed condition though happily all but one, a Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* survived the experience thanks to the efforts of the personnel administering aid. Others were: 3 Sooty Terns, 2 Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, storm-petrel, species uncertain, 1 British Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, 1 Madeiran Storm-petrel *O. castro*, 1 shearwater, species uncertain, 1 Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*, 1 Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*, 1 Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*, 1 White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*, 1 White-tailed Tropic-bird *Phaethon lepturus* which disgorged some squid, and 1 American Shearbill *Chionis alba*. This bird was reported from Act 7, Captain D. M. McPhail, on 25 Mar 84 at 55°S 64°W (with possible sightings 2-3 days earlier). The bird was seen on top of the containers where it was approached and photographed being quite unafraid.

Of some interest is a report from M.V. *Roach Bank*, Captain H. Barber, on 13 Apr 84 at 34°06'N 60°54'W reporting an adult and two second-year Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* landing on the ship, one of the second-year birds being oiled on the underparts and in some distress trying to clean itself. After a while the clean second-year bird flew off but later returned and appeared to be trying to feed its oiled fellow. All three birds remained with the vessel for four days before departing. I remarked, an interesting observation, if the conclusion was correct, however as these gulls are not noted for their sympathy, rather the opposite, taking advantage of injury or incapacity for easy pickings rather than giving assistance.

Another interesting report comes from M.V. *E. W. Beatty*, Captain R. Neadrick. On 26 July 1984 at 35°05'S 115°43'E 5-6 skuas — probably Antarctic Skuas *Catharacta antarctica* — were being coaxed to the bridge wing and there taking food from the hand — suitably gloved! Possibly the presence of the Third Officer's wife was in some way reassuring! Photographs were taken which should be of considerable interest.

One or two reports from the North Pacific were suggestive of possible sightings of the Short-tailed Albatross *Diomedea albatrus*, emphasising the "flesh pink bill"; however, I am of the firm

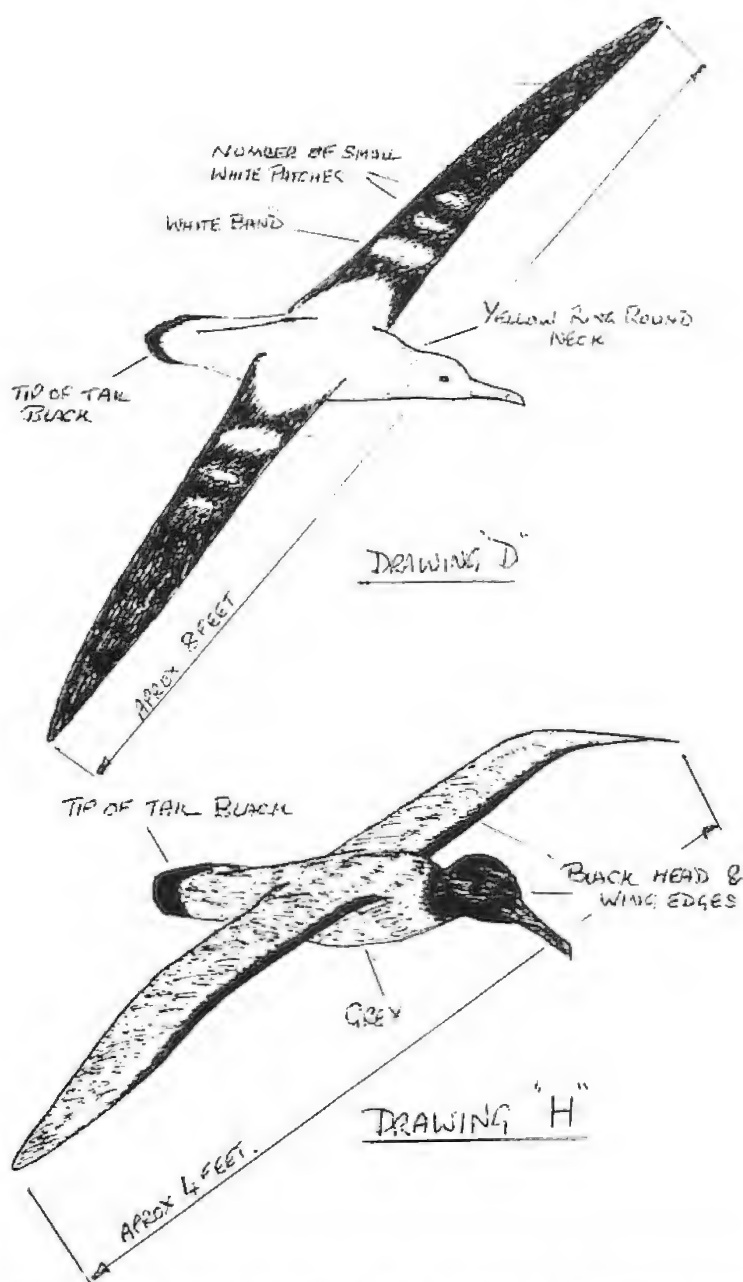


Fig. 1. Seabird sketches from Met. Logbook M.V. *Lincoln Brook* identified as: Drawing D Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* and Drawing H Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*

Sketches: P. G. Powell

opinion that these birds were in fact Laysan Albatrosses *D. immutabilis* from the general appearance. I was also disappointed in not having made a "P" — positive sighting of this elusive beauty, although I once purposely shaped my course to pass close to Tori Shima, when sailing from Japan, but of course we had to pass at night in the middle watch and all I saw was a dark silhouette of the island! My owners were not advised.

It is pleasing to report that thanks to the good offices of the Meteorological Office Marine Department we are recruiting a few keen members and hopefully more will also be encouraged to join.

Captain A. S. Young, M.N., Tisbury, Lambwath Lane, New Ellerby, North Humberside HU11 5AP.

## NEW AND UNUSUAL SEABIRD RECORDS SUMMARISED FROM RECENT LITERATURE

By S. E. Chapman

In response to last year's request the present summary includes a large number of items submitted by Captain N. G. Cheshire which are gratefully acknowledged. As previously, the summary is based principally on the joint British Ornithologists' Union and American Ornithologists' Union survey of Recent Literature, *Ibis* 126 (3 and 4, Suppl.) and *Ibis* 127 (1 and 2, Suppl.) and journals that are received in exchange for *Sea Swallow*. The difficulty in positively identifying shearwaters outside of their normal range is highlighted by the supposed Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, a claimed first in Australasian seas (*Notornis* 29: 85-91) which are now considered to be Pink-footed Shearwaters *Puffinus creatopus* (*Notornis* 31: 130). Although not all strictly unusual records, a very interesting paper appeared in the 1983 *London Bird Report* 48: 106-119 in which A. V. Moon details the occurrence of pelagic seabirds in the London area over many years. The numbers of individuals and species involved are remarkable including such as Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*, Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Little Auk *Alle alle*. Some occurrences are explained by the fact that small numbers of some species migrate overland but the majority are clearly victims of storms, as with the massive wreck of seabirds in eastern Britain in February 1983 when over 34,000 dead or dying birds came ashore. Some of the following sightings in unusual places may also be linked with the passage of storms or simply the result of normal vagrancy.

Chinstrap Penguin *Pygoscelis antarctica*. A single adult photographed on about 15 March 1983 at Gough Island is the first for this locality. The nearest breeding site is Bouvet Island some 1,000 miles to the south-east. J. W. Enticott, 1984. *Cormorant* 12: 75-81.

Laysan Albatross *Diomedea immutabilis*. A remarkable first sight and photographic record of this vagrant albatross in the southern Indian Ocean at 38°S 23°E on 29 April 1983. P. Harrison, 1983. *Cormorant* 11: 39-43.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*. Two new sightings in Irish and British waters since 1978 were recorded off Ross-lare, Co. Wexford, an adult on 9 September 1982, and one bird at St. Ives, Cornwall on 5 October 1982. M. J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee, 1984. *Brit. Birds* 77: 506-562. A new southern Chile breeding colony of 30,000 birds discovered on Isla Diego de Almagro, 51°20'S 75°13'W. G. S. Clarke, A. J. Goodwin and A. P. von Meyer, 1984. *Notornis* 31: 320-324.

Buller's Albatross *Diomedea bulleri*. Small breeding colony discovered in 1983 on Three Kings Islands (34°S) some 800 miles NW from the previously known colony on the Chatham Islands (44°S). A. Wright, 1984. *Notornis* 31: 203-7.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. Breeding (21 occupied nests) recorded on Chiloe Island (41°55'S 74°02'W) in 1981. M. Martin, 1984 *Auk* 101: 192. Estimated breeding colony of 200,000 on Isla Guafo (43°36'S 74°43'W), Chile. G. S. Clarke, A. J. Goodwin and A. P. von Meyer, 1984 *Notornis* 31: 320-24. Previously only confirmed to breed in Chile on islands around Cape Horn.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*. This distinctive shearwater was noted as widespread and locally common off northern Australia over the Timor Sea and Arafura Sea areas during summer 1980. M. Carter, 1983. *Australian Bird Watcher* 10: 113-121.

Frigate-bird *Fregata* sp. First Norwegian sight record of an immature not specifically identified on 27 September 1983. *Brit. Birds* 77: 586.

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*. A dead bird picked up on Luzon Island on 6 December 1981. This first occurrence for the Philippines may have been associated with a typhoon in the prior month. E. W. Wischusen, R. S. Kennedy and S. E. Gast, 1984. *Auk* 101: 185.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*. Another report from the Atlantic coast of Morocco on 10 April 1983, possibly the same individual as seen in the same location the previous autumn, adds to a growing number of eastern Atlantic sightings. O. O'Sullivan, 1984. *Dutch Birding* 6: 54.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. The first sight record from Darwin Harbour, Australia, with photograph, April 1982. G. Shannan and J. L. McKean, 1983. *Australian Bird Watcher* 10: 82-83.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. First nesting in the Palearctic zone noted on the Salvage Islands on 6 July 1982 amongst Roseate Terns *Sterna dougalli*. F. Roux, 1983. *Oiseau R.F.O.* 53: 291-2.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. A single adult on Cousin Island, 20 December 1982: new to the Seychelles Republic. N. J. Phillips, 1984. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 104: 9-10.



## SEABIRDS AT MOHELI, COMORO ISLANDS

By D. Draulans, M. Herremans and M. Louette

### Introduction

Moheli, one of the four islands in the Comoro archipelago (12°S 44°E), western Indian Ocean, is seldom visited and the surrounding islets off its east and south coasts have never been seriously explored. Benson (1960) reviews all previous collections and his own 1958 expedition, when he obtained eight specimens of *Phaethon lepturus*, including three young at Maussi, near the south coast of Moheli. These represent the only bird specimens ever collected on the islets. Benson himself spent only part of the day of 16 September 1958 in visiting some of them, but he mentions only one species observed in his systematic list and another in the appendix. He was surprised to find no other breeding seabird species in the Comoros, but strongly recommended ornithologists to investigate the islet M'Chaco, east of Moheli. Forbes-Watson (1969), the next ornithologist visiting the archipelago, was unable to explore the islets and merely states that M'Chaco appeared "very white-washed" from the air. This author quotes the statement of Mr Flobert, who said that many seabirds are nesting on M'Chaco, who "dived at him". Salvan (1972) indicates that the islets might provide surprises and again mentions Chagoas (in his spelling) as a place reputed to hold "an enormous seabird colony, with at least three species of tern". The knowledge of the pelagic distribution of seabirds in the Indian Ocean in general has been summarised by Bailey (1968).

The nearest recorded colonies are situated in the Iles Mitsios (NW Madagascar) which holds *Sula leucogaster* (Polunin, 1979); the Iles Glorieuses with recently only terns (*Sterna fuscata*, *Anous stolidus*) as reported on by Benson *et al.* (1975), and of course Aldabra with several species (see full list in Diamond, 1971). These three localities are equidistant about 400 km away from the Comoros. Further south, there is the atoll Juan de Nova about 525 km away with a large colony of *Sterna fuscata* and some *S. bergii* (Malzy, 1965).

### Observations on the islets

Since no ornithologist had apparently visited the islets after Benson, we made a special effort to do so during the second Belgian Zoological Expedition. On the 8th November 1983 M'Chaco (1), east of Moheli, was reached by Draulans who spent the whole day there. The 9th, 10th and 11th he stayed on the islet Canzoni (south of Moheli) and from there also visited Dzaha and

(1) All locality names have been taken from the Moheli map (1/50 000) by IGN, Paris.

Magnougni. On the 16th M'Chaco and Magnougni were visited again. In the present report we will discuss our observations and indicate the suitability of these islets as breeding stations for seabirds in general.

#### M'CHACO

M'Chaco is a completely white-washed rocky outcrop. It is 30-40 m high and has a circumference of about 500 m. At low tide it is possible to land, but it was impossible to climb the rock. The top of it forms a large inclined platform.

On 8 November at about 1030, 178 *Sula dactylatra* were counted on the top. Most were adults in breeding dress and spaced out in pairs. Two birds were sitting on the ground, as if they were breeding. Some birds performed a kind of display. Seven full-grown juveniles were also counted. At 1430 there were only 38 birds present, including the two "breeders", some displayers and one juvenile. The others left in the course of the day in small flocks NNE to the area of the sea between Moheli and Anjouan. Some birds landed on the sea close to the rock. Many boobies also made short flights around the rock. On 16 November, 140 birds were present, including five juveniles and some "breeders". This count was also performed in the morning. According to the local fishermen large white birds are present all the year round.

Other birds recorded here were a foraging *Ardea cinerea*, two resident *Falco peregrinus* and, on the 8th, eleven adult *Sula leucogaster*, sitting in a flock on the top of the rock. The latter left in the course of the forenoon.

Many small holes in the cliff, which were certainly unsuitable for *Sula* as a breeding place, also showed white markings. The islet thus probably also provides breeding sites for other cliff-nesting species that prefer crevices. However, none were recorded close to the islet during our visits.

#### GNANDZA

This is a very small rocky islet of only about 5 m high east of Moheli. It may be completely covered at extreme high tide. On the 8th no birds could be discovered nor indications of breeding. The top of the islet, however, was also white-washed. It could probably serve as a temporary resting place for some species.

#### M'BOUZI, BOUELAMANGA and CHIKOUNDOU

These islets are also rocky and steep, but are connected with the mainland of Moheli at low tide. They are used by local fishermen to catch sea-turtles. Their tops are covered with grass. We did not visit them.

## CANZONI

Canzoni is a large rocky islet with a sandy bay. At low tide this bay attracts numbers of herons (*Ardea humbloti*, *Egretta alba* and *Butorides striatus* were seen) and waders (e.g. *Dromas ardeola*, *Numenius arquata* and *N. phaeopus*).

The cliff towards Moheli is very steep, and here again many holes with a white line are present. *Phaethon lepturus* was seen here and almost certainly breeds. This species was always in small groups of up to four birds and we estimate the number seen here and at Dzaha combined at about 30. Local fishermen confirmed that this species is present the year round near this islet. We did not make observations of other cliff-nesting species near the islet nor did we hear any calls in the evening and at night.

The southern part of Canzoni is less steep and overgrown with grasses, the other flanks also having in part a cover of bushes. Here, a series of landbirds are present (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*, *Terpsiphone mutata*, *Nectarinia humbloti*, *Foudia madagascariensis*, *Corvus albus*, *Apus barbatus*, *Tyto alba*, *Circus maillardi*, *Milvus migrans*, *Falco peregrinus*; the last one definitely breeding).

In the neighbourhood of this islet observations were made of noddies (*Anous* sp.), frigate-birds (*Fregata minor* and *F. ariel*), a species of *Oceanodroma*, and terns (*Sterna* spp.).

## DZAHA (also called Maussi on older maps)

This islet is connected to Canzoni at low tide and looks very much like the last one but without the grassy parts. We did not visit it at night.

## MAGNOUGNI

The most western islet in the series is called "Bird Island" by the local fishermen. It is steep and rocky and landing is difficult. The northern part is less steep and it is possible to reach the top; many low bushes grow here, especially on the southern side. The birds seen here were the same as on Canzoni, but Magnougni has a surprisingly large number of frigate-birds of both species (hundreds) that come to roost in the shrubs on the south flank. They arrive in the evening and depart early in the morning. The count made gave a proportion of about 85% *ariel*, based on males only. The local fishermen claim they breed here at another season, but we got no confirmation for this statement. Again, there are also a number of holes with white lining, but without direct observations as to the occupants. Tropic-birds seemed less numerous here than on Canzoni and Dzaha.

The other islets (Ouenefou, Chandzi, Mea) are similar, but since they are so much more accessible there are more people visiting them, and therefore more possible disturbance for the birds. We did not visit them.



## Observations from boats in Comoro waters

In addition to the records made above, we also saw seabirds from the ferries between the islands during the first Belgian Zoological Expedition: a trip from Grand Comoro (Moroni) halfway towards Moheli and back to Grand Comoro on 29 July 1981 by Herremans, Louette and R. Potvliege; and during the second Belgian Zoological Expedition: one trip from Grand Comoro (Moroni) to Moheli (Moihani: south coast) on 23 September 1983 by L. Janssens, J. Bogaert, M. Dumalin; and again from Grand Comoro (Moroni) to Moheli (Fomboni: north coast) on 3 November 1983 by Draulans.

Due to technical problems with the boat the 1981 trip did not permit well documented observations, but the following were definitely seen: *Fregata ariel*, *Oceanodroma* cf. *matsudairae* (up to ten in a flock), *Sterna* cf. *fuscata* and also a species of *Puffinus*, probably *lherminieri* (see hereafter), a species of *Pterodroma*, possibly *arminjoniana* (Potvliege) and possibly a *Bulweria* sp.

The first trip in 1983 yielded: *Sula sula* (1), *Sula dactylatra* (2, 1, 1), *Phaethon lepturus* (2), *Fregata ariel* (1), *Fregata minor* (1), and several flocks of terns (*S. anaethetus* or *fuscata*) or noddies (*Anous* sp.), as follows: 23, 10, 15, 20, 17, 3.

During the second trip in 1983 only two *Fregata* sp. were seen near Grand Comoro, but on the approaches of Moheli there were *Sula sula* (2), *Sula* sp. (5), *Puffinus* cf. *pacificus*, dark phase, in numbers plus other unidentified shearwaters. Near Moheli Draulans saw *Fregata ariel* (1), *Larus* sp. (*fuscus* or *domicanus*, immatures, 2), *Sterna caspia* (2), *Anous* sp. (18), and numbers of terns (including *S. bergii*) and shearwaters, with *P. lherminieri* as a probable species (see hereafter). In the late afternoon frigate-birds appeared (cf. above, Magnougny) and a few *Phaethon lepturus*.

The same species were seen regularly between the islets on the south coast, but *Puffinus lherminieri* and *Sula* spp. were not seen S of Moheli.

## Observations on the main Comoro Islands

The number of seabirds seen from the coast of the main islands - Grand Comoro, Moheli, Anjouan, Mayotte - is remarkably low. Only some terns (*Sterna bengalensis* and *S. bergii*), frigate-birds and tropic-birds were seen at all regularly, but always in low numbers, except on 5 October 1983 when J. Janssens, J. Bogaert and M. Dumalin saw about 30 frigate-birds from Miringoni, Moheli, without doubt part of the birds roosting on Magnougny. In the afternoon of 9 October 1983 at least nine frigate-birds flying southwards were also watched from Salimani, southwestern Grand Comoro. Between 25 October and 3 November 1983, during his stay at Mayotte, Louette saw no frigate-birds at all, although he watched the sea for many hours from different places. It seems therefore that during our stay these birds were present mostly in the western part of the archipelago.



The few tropic-birds, and to a lesser extent some terns, were seen in the same localities during consecutive days on all four main islands. With a strong telescope, however, one is able to discern groups of seabirds at some distance offshore. A population of a new race of *Puffinus lherminieri* also nests on the upper slopes of Moheli itself (Louette & Herremans, in press). Bourne & Dixon (1975) expected this species to breed on the Comoro Islands on account of an observation by Lofgren on 20 July 1970 at 13°S 44°15'E about 80 km SE Moheli).

## Discussion

The most remarkable seabird discoveries are the breeding colony of *Sula dactylatra*, on M'Chaco, the large roosting-place of *Fregata* spp. on Magnougni, and the breeding population of *Puffinus lherminieri* on Moheli. It must be stressed that the surmise of Salvan (1972), M'Chaco being a tern colony may be incorrect and possibly his information on Chagoas pertained to another locality. *Sula dactylatra* is not known to nest any closer to M'Chaco than Cosmoledo (Diamond, 1971) and Latham Island, about 700 km away (Gerhart & Turner, 1978). *Puffinus lherminieri* nests on Aldabra but this is another subspecies (Diamond, 1971). The frigate-bird roost on Magnougni may attract the whole "Comoro population" of these species, and one wonders if the paucity of *Sula* sp. in the waters nearby may be related to their presence. It seems that the boobies prefer the open sea northeast of M'Chaco for the day-time activity.

## Acknowledgements

Our studies in the Comoros became possible thanks to grants of the Belgian "Nationaal Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek" to Louette; Draulans was supported by the K. U. Leuven, and Herremans held a "Chapman memorial grant, American Museum of Natural History" and a Belgian Touring Club travel grant. We thank the persons mentioned in the text for transmission of their observations and all these, too many to enumerate here, who facilitated our stay in various ways.

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## SHORT NOTES

### BIRDWATCHING IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

It was in 1978 that I discovered there was someone interested in the birds one saw at sea, namely the R.N.B.W.S.; provided with a description and sketch they would let you know what it was you had seen. So I joined the R.N.B.W.S. and with encouragement from Captain Tuck and Lt. Cdr. Maclure my interest grew. I decided that I might do better photographing birds than trying to sketch them, so a camera was purchased.

In August 1978 I joined the M.V. *Bayano*, a container ship on a weekly service between Gulfport, Mississippi and Cortes, Honduras. I could not have picked a better time for birdwatching if I had tried because the autumn migration had started. The first night out a bird was found in the accommodation and brought to me. Photos were taken and it was later identified as a Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorus*. That bird has a lot to answer for — the cameras, lenses and flashes that have been bought since! 1978 was a bad year for migrating birds. The weather was bad and we had many land on board for shelter, but for me it was fascinating. Armed with a *Field Guide to Birds East of the Rockies* (Peterson) I was able to identify and photograph. I spent the next six years on that run serving on the *Bayano* and *Barranca*, both now sadly scrapped.

Very few seabirds were seen out to sea on that run, but the landbirds were memorable. Some that come to mind are: Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens*, Black-and-White Warbler *Mniotilta varia*, Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*, Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, Prothonotory Warbler *Prothonotaria citrea*, and the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* that spent the night on the radar scanner and was photographed by the light



Black-and-White Warbler *Mniotilta varia*,  
Gulf of Mexico, 18 August 1983

Photo: R. L. Westwater

of the aldis lamp. I was out before dawn to try and get a good photo but before there was enough light it woke up, had a look around, spread its wings and was on its way, but having been that close to this magnificent bird was ample reward. It could well have been the same bird I photographed some time later with a fish in its talons. I remember the American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* that darted all round the ship after the warblers with some success, and the young Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* that we saw off the island of Cozumel every week for about a month and once landed on the container crane making another memorable photograph. Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* seemed to be with us all the time and calling constantly, especially at night, and the Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were always on the move and looked slow but were always overtaking us, but at times were happy to hitch a lift and never seemed to mind which way we were going.

The memory of storms, hurricanes and the like tend to fade but birds that enriched those years and kindled in others an interest in birds remain vividly in my mind and, should the memories fade,

These days with the wealth of bird books available, including Captain Tuck's *Seabirds of Britain and the World*, and now Peter Harrison's *Seabird Identification Guide*, one can hope to identify the birds one sees almost immediately. It adds to the excitement

when for example after two blank days a Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* lands on deck 500 miles south of the Azores, and it keeps you watching.

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*Comment* Many will be familiar with the fascinating series of landbird observations from Captain Westwater (RLW) summarised regularly in *Sea Swallow* in recent years in Section D (Gulf of Mexico) of the annual landbird analyses. He has certainly made a good choice of camera and several of his excellent photographs have been published in *Sea Swallow*. These have also been invaluable to me for identifying unfamiliar American species, and I have used many of them as slides for lecturing about R.N.B.W.S., and landbird migration, to audiences in U.S.A.

M.B.C.

## KLEPTOPARASITISM OF SEA LIONS BY MAGNIFICENT FRIGATE-BIRDS

Although kleptoparasitism of mammals by birds is considered rare (Brockmann and Barnard 1979), several species of seabirds are known to rob pinnipeds (Murphy 1936, Ryder 1957, Meinertzhagen 1959, Duffy 1980, 1982). On 20 July 1984 we observed a dozen Magnificent Frigate-birds *Fregata magnificens* as they stole fish from a group of 20 Galapagos Sea Lions *Zalophus californianus galapagoensis* along the north shore of South Plaza Island in the Galapagos Archipelago. Individual birds swooped down repeatedly on the feeding sea lions and grabbed pieces of fish floating on the surface. Tim Rochester, a member of our tour group, saw one bird grab an approximately 15 cm long fish from the open mouth of a sea lion. This was our only observation of this behaviour during a ten-week visit to Galapagos.

Duffy (1982) spent a month in the Galapagos Islands observing kleptoparasitism in seabirds and did not witness any parasitic attempts on sea lions by frigate-birds, but recorded an attempt by a Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxi*. Snow and Snow (1969) casually mentioned that Lava Gulls *Larus fuliginosus* and frigate-birds steal floating pieces of fish from feeding sea lions, and Amilcar Valle (pers. comm.), a resident ornithologist in the Galapagos Islands, reported that he has seen frigate-birds robbing sea lions on a few occasions. Since Magnificent Frigate-birds are well known pirates of many species of birds (see Brockmann and Barnard 1979) and even humans (Buckley and Tilger 1983), it is not too surprising that they occasionally rob sea lions. Valle (pers. comm.) suggested that piracy of sea lions may occur most often when food is scarce.

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*Comment.* There may be several reasons for an association between marine birds and mammals, as recently discussed by P. G. H. Evans in *Mammal Review* 12: 187-206. Firstly, both may be feeding on the same prey; where marine mammals herd a shoal of fish against the water surface they become available to birds which could not otherwise catch them. Secondly, the birds may gather to scavenge fragments of food left by the mammals; it becomes difficult to separate this from the type of parasitism described here where the birds actually steal the food from the animals. Thirdly, the mammals may eventually get their own back by starting to catch the birds as well — see W. E. Clegg and J. E. Hamilton in *Ibis* 87: 422 and 88: 131-32, also in the *Seabird Report* 3: 52-53.

W.R.P.B.

## ADULT SANDWICH TERNS FEEDING JUVENILES WHILST ON AUTUMN PASSAGE

It is well known for fairly large numbers of Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* to be seen on autumn passage from The Island promontory at St. Ives, Cornwall. On 29 September 1984 for example, over three hours I counted at least 250 Sandwich Terns moving in groups in a southerly direction comprising large and small parties of adults and juveniles. Others stayed in St. Ives Bay to feed for short periods. I was particularly interested in these because I noticed the juveniles in flight endeavouring to follow the flight manoeuvres of some of the adults — presumably parents of these young birds. On occasions juveniles would alight on the sea persistently calling, soliciting to be fed by the adults. This behaviour sometimes resulted in their being fed whilst resting on the sea.

I have not observed similar behaviour in other species of terns. It is interesting to note however, that Sandwich Terns have been recorded carrying small fish in their bills when on autumn migration (T. C. Smout and H. F. Dixon, *British Birds* 45:73-4), and that parental dependence may continue through the winter (G. J. Oree, *Dutch Birding* 5:17-18).

Bernard King, Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Ross, M. J. 1982. **Ross in the Antarctic** — the voyage of James Clark Ross in Her Majesty's Ships *Erebus* and *Terror*. Caedmon of Whitby. £12.50.

For many years I was rather puzzled by hundreds of excellent and important old skins from the Southern Ocean dating from the foundation of the bird collection in the British Museum (Natural History) merely labelled "Antarctic Expedition", for which rather little other information appeared to be available. We now owe an important debt to Rear-Admiral Ross for reminding us how his inarticulate great-grandfather in the most successful British polar expedition, long forgotten in favour of the disasters, once took two old bomb-ships through the Antarctic pack-ice to find a new sea. Not content with that he went on to explore the equally forbidding Weddell Sea as well, sorting out the terrestrial magnetism of the southern hemisphere, plumbing the ocean depths, and making important natural history collections in the process.

Unfortunately when Ross returned, doubtless exhausted, and tried to settle down to rear a family and write up his results, he was distracted by the disappearance of his ships and friends on their next voyage under Sir John Franklin (who of course also had a gull named after him), and had to go in search of them instead. His assistant surgeon, the botanist J. Hooker, also appears to have disparaged his old patron when he himself became a great man, so that Ross never received proper recognition as the precursor of the famous voyage of the *Challenger*, and even his bird skins have been attributed to his surgeon Robert McCormick, an amiable marsh cowboy fittingly commemorated in the name of a skua.

An examination of the handwriting on the labels confirms that in addition to the famous Arctic collection containing the type specimen of the beautiful and elusive gull named after him, now in the Royal Scottish Museum, described in the *Scottish Naturalist* by Surgeon Rear-Admiral Stenhouse in 1930, Ross also sent an even more important Antarctic collection to the British Museum which has never been properly described. It seems time he received more recognition as, among other things, our first true naval ornithologist.

W. R. P. Bourne

Blake, B. F., Tasker, M. L., Hope Jones, P., Dixon, T. J., Mitchell, R., and Langslow, D. R., 1984. **Seabird distribution in the North Sea**. Huntingdon, Nature Conservancy Council. Mimeographed, p.438, 60 tables, 60 diagrams and 139 maps. ISBN 0-86139-225-6. £9.50.

Anderson, A. (ed.), 1984. **North Sea Bird Club Fourth Annual Report for the year ended 1983**. Culterty Field Station, Newburgh, Ellon, Aberdeenshire. Mimeographed, p.82, 2 plates, 6 diagrams and a map.

It is curious how once it had been shown that industrial development appeared to be causing little harm to birds in the North Sea, governments and industry made haste to confirm the conclusion. These reports cover computer analyses in the American style of observations by a small team of professionals employed by the Nature Conservancy Council to watch birds at sea, assisted by ships' companies of the R.N. Fishery Protection Squadron, and larger numbers of amateurs, and supported by the oil companies on their installations. These confirm the original conclusions in increasingly confusing detail. The item of most general interest is an appendix to the first report discussing methods of counting birds from ships, and recommending that people should use some half a dozen ways simultaneously. In view of the difficulty that we have in persuading people to apply one technique consistently it is difficult to see how it will work in practice.

W. R. P. Bourne

Tunnicliffe, C. F. 1984. **Shorelands Summer Diary**. Orbis Publishing. Paperback £9.00. (There is also a hardback edition published by Clive Holloway Books at £12.95.)

First published in 1952, this is a delightful coffee-table size book about an idyllic existence on the Isle of Anglesey. As one would expect from an author who was a member of the Royal Academy, the illustrations are both copious and satisfying, with sixteen of them in colour.

Already an established artist, Charles Tunnicliffe and his wife moved in middle age from the Midlands to Shorelands, a cottage situated on an estuary in the South of Anglesey and ideal for the study of birds; waders in particular. For your reviewer, though, who is a pelagic birdwatcher, one of the principal delights of the book is to go for a walk or drive with the author, for that is what you do, and listen to his thoughts as he makes his various discoveries; and all the time he is working away with his pencil.

One is with him all summer from April through September and although his greatest enthusiasm is for a family of Peregrine Falcons, he doesn't spend every day with them and there are all sorts of other things that catch his eye. It is his landsman's descriptions of seabirds that I like particularly; Black-headed Gulls feasting on flying ants; standing quietly on the shore within twenty feet of a dozing Red-necked Phalarope for an hour and a half (which enabled him to produce a lovely picture for the book); and watching an invalid Common Gull scientifically smash mussel shells using a trick that its Herring Gull neighbour was quite unable to master.



I could sympathise with his frustration — “We wished ourselves a thousand yards nearer” — as he and his wife watched through binoculars a flock of seabirds feeding on a shoal of fry; unlike a ship, Anglesey won’t move! But perhaps the phrase that will stay with me longest is the one he uses when he sees a flying Cormorant that has just dropped a struggling eel from its beak; the bird “followed it down tumbling like an old umbrella”.

This book is a beautiful description of a lovely place though, before one rushes to buy a house in Anglesey, it is clear that the author was so happy there because he was so busy.

I recommend the book as a birthday or Christmas present.

M. G. T. Harris

## TAIL PIECE

### DEATH ON THE ATLANTIC EXPRESS

The following story is gleaned from the Meteorological Log of M.V. *Clydebank* (Captain C. B. Davies) on passage from Europe to Panama. -

On 10 April 1984 when 360 miles N.E. Azores a dove, looking like a carrier pigeon but bearing no rings so presumed to be a feral dove, was seen walking on top of the containers in front of the bridge. The dove came into the wheelhouse and proceeded to inspect the chart. It was extremely friendly, seemed to like walking on paper and became especially excited about chart corrections and walking over the tracing paper. It made frequent use of pots of water which were placed strategically around the wheelhouse, and gobbled up a handful of uncooked rice.

When passing within 7 miles of Graciosa Island in the Azores on 11 April it was decided to scare the bird out of the wheelhouse. After much ado, it reluctantly went out on to the bridge wing and was coaxed to fly but it went only as far as the containers in front of the accommodation where it perched and remained in a sulk. For the next four days it became resigned to its relegation to the starboard bridge wing and based itself under the gyro repeater. It made frequent forays to enter the wheelhouse from where it was barred because of the mess it caused, especially at feeding times.

On passing through the Mona Passage on 18th it showed no inclination to fly to the nearby land, and appeared to have made the ship its permanent home. It made occasional short flights round the vessel, especially at dawn and dusk, and it was on one such flight on the morning of the 19th that it was attacked by two frigate-birds which forced it into the sea. What a sudden and tragic end after such a long and ambitious journey!



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I am interested in the R.N.B.W.S. and wish to assist the Society in carrying out its objectives. I wish to be enrolled as:

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## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*. Authors do not need to be R.N.B.W.S. members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing and submitted in duplicate. Figures and diagrams should be prepared in the size of final production.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references as in *British Birds*.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by 1st February.